

# The Agricultural History Review

## Volume 52 Part I 2004

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# Society Notices

## *People, landscape and alternative agriculture*

With this issue of the *Review*, individual members of the Society will receive their copy of the essays for Dr Joan Thirsk first given at the conference held in her honour in 2002. In common with previous supplements to the *Review*, this is not supplied to institutional subscribers *gratis*. We hope that members in institutions with subscriptions to the *Review* will ensure that their libraries place an order for this supplement allowing these excellent essays to achieve the widest circulation.

The full bibliographical details are: R. W. Hoyle (ed.), *People, landscape and alternative agriculture* (Agricultural History Review supp. ser. 3, xii + 148pp. ISBN 0 903269-02-1, £17.50), available from the Treasurer, BAHS, Department of History, University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter, EX4 4RJ.

## Winter Conference 2004 *Farming in upland Britain*

The Winter Conference will take place on 4 December 2004 at the Institute of Historical Research, London. Full details can be downloaded from the Society's web site and will be circulated with *Rural History Today* in August.

## Spring Conference 2005 *Call for papers*

The Society's Spring Conference will take place at the University of Leicester on 11–13 April 2005. Offers of papers – which may be on any period or subject within agricultural and rural history broadly construed – should be sent to the Society's secretary, Dr John Broad, no later than 1 September 2004.

## University of Reading *Field Sports and rural society since 1850*

Attention is drawn to a conference at the University of Reading on Field Sports since 1850 in Britain to be held on 14 September 2004. Speakers include Dr Ed Bujak, Prof. Richard Hoyle, Dr Harvey Osborne, Dr Ian Roberts, Dr Michael Tichelar, Prof. Charles Watkins and Dr Michael Winstanley.

Details can be obtained from Prof. Richard Hoyle. [r.w.hoyle@reading.ac.uk](mailto:r.w.hoyle@reading.ac.uk).

# Reflections on American agricultural history\*

by R. Douglas Hurt

## *Abstract*

This paper reviews the contribution of American agricultural history over the twentieth century. It traces the earliest writings on the topic before the foundation of the Agricultural History Society in 1919. The discipline is reviewed under six heads: land policy including tenancy; slave institutions and post-bellum tenancy in the southern states; agricultural organizations; the development of commercial agriculture; government policy towards farming; and the recent concern with rural social history. A final section considers whether the lack of any definition of agricultural history has been a strength or a weakness for the discipline.

The history of American agriculture as a recognized field of study dates from the early twentieth century. In 1914, Louis B. Schmidt apparently taught the first agricultural history course in the United States at Iowa State College. Schmidt urged scholars to study the history of agriculture to help government officials provide solutions to problems that were becoming increasingly economic rather than political. He believed historians had given too much attention to political, military and religious history, and Schmidt considered the economic history of agriculture a new and exciting subject for historical inquiry. Schmidt recognized the limitless topical nature of such work, because so little had been done. He urged historians to investigate land, immigration, tariff, currency, and banking policy, as well as organized labour, corporate regulation, slavery, and the influences of agriculture, broadly conceived, on the development of national life.<sup>1</sup>

Schmidt called on the first generation of professionally trained historians, who intended to make history more useful and relevant and whose interests often involved economic causation, to interpret the present 'in light of economic and social evolution'. Schmidt wrote: 'Viewed in one way the history of the United States from the beginning has been in a very large measure the story of rural communities advancing westward by the conquest of the soil, developing from a state of primitive self-sufficiency to a capitalistic and highly complex agricultural organization'. Clearly, he was influenced by the frontier thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner, who saw the American experience continually remade as settlers moved west across the continent. In the

\* A lecture given at the Society's Golden Jubilee conference, Winchester, April 2003.

<sup>1</sup> The literature on American agricultural history is voluminous. The sources cited here are provided as examples for the various topics under consideration and to introduce the reader to these areas for further research and learning. Wayne D. Rasmussen, 'The growth of agricultural history', in William B. Hasseltine and Donald R. McNeil (eds), *Support of Clio. Essays in memory of Herbert A. Keller* (1958), p. 162; Louis B. Schmidt, 'The economic history of American agriculture', *Mississippi Valley Historical Rev.* 3 (June 1916), p. 40.

best tradition of the ancient Greek historian Polybius, Schmidt also expected the economic history of American agriculture to provide useful lessons for the present. Schmidt believed 'Government action involving agricultural interests should be based on a broad knowledge of rural economic history', and that agricultural history was 'indispensable to a correct understanding of much of our political and diplomatic history'. Fundamentally, the study of agricultural history provided lessons on cause and effect in American history. In many respects Schmidt foresaw the emergence of what has been called the new rural history. He contended that agricultural history should be 'viewed not in the strict or narrow sense, but in the broad sense so as to include the whole life of the rural population, the influences which have affected its progress and the influence its progress has in turn had on the course of events'. The result, Schmidt believed would lead to 'a well balanced history of our nation'.<sup>2</sup>

Schmidt apparently did not realize that scholars and bureaucrats had already embarked on the study of agricultural history in both economic and social contexts. Without reaching far it is not too much to say that William A. Weaver, superintendent of the 1840 census, who had responsibility for collecting agricultural information, ranked among the earliest agricultural historians, followed by Henry David Thoreau, who gave a philosophical context to his bean field in *Walden*, published in 1854. Harriet Beecher Stowe, who wrote about slavery, arguably, can be ranked among the nation's earliest agricultural historians. If not, then early interest in American agricultural history can be found in the annual reports of the US Patent Office and US Department of Agriculture as well as in the annual reports of many state departments of agriculture. Outsiders, as well as employees who believed that historical background enhanced their reports on current conditions, contributed to these documents. Although these reports often were statistical compilations or a glorification of agriculture, they also included useful information about local conditions that provide important knowledge about the past.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, by the time Schmidt called for historians to investigate agricultural history to provide perspective and contribute to an integrated story of the national experience, Frederick Jackson Turner had already laid the foundation for the systematic study of the field based on the idea that free land determined the development of American institutions until 1890, when the Bureau of the Census declared that the frontier no longer existed. Turner stimulated the systematic study of agricultural history as a result of his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1893. In that address, entitled 'The significance of the frontier in American history', Turner contended that the frontier and free land explained the causes and consequences of social and economic change in American life. His paper served as the landmark for the scholarly study of agricultural history because it centered on pioneer farmers and their relationship to the environment. James C. Malin called Turner's frontier hypothesis 'an agricultural interpretation of American history'. Much of the work that followed Turner's

<sup>2</sup> Schmidt, 'The economic history of American agriculture', pp. 40-1, 43, 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Census of the United States, 1840*; Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (1854); Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin or life among the lowly* (1852); Everett E. Edwards, 'Agricultural history and the Department of Agriculture', *Agricultural Hist.* 16 (1942), p. 129;

Benjamin Perley Poore, 'History of agriculture of the United States', *Annual Report of the United States Department of Agriculture*, 1866; Charles L. Flint, 'A hundred years' progress', *Annual Report of the United States Department of Agriculture*, 1872; *Special report on the history and present condition of the sheep industry in the United States* (1892).

address for more than a century involved local and regional studies, usually with an economic focus on topics such as crop and livestock production, credit problems, technological change, and land policy.<sup>4</sup>

Other scholars who pursued agricultural history during the early twentieth century were not historians by training or even academics. The early membership of the Agricultural History Society, founded on 14 February 1919 at the Cosmos Club in Washington DC, included economists, rural sociologists, biologists, librarians, and journalists, many of whom were employed by the United States Department of Agriculture. Rodney H. True, the first president of the Society, was a botanist and Lyman Carrier, the first secretary-treasurer, an agronomist. The Society, whose modest purpose was 'To stimulate interest, promote the study and facilitate the publication of researches in the history of agriculture' – a goal that remains unchanged today – perhaps attracted few historians as members because Article IV provided that application for membership 'shall have been recommended by two members and elected by a majority vote of the Executive Committee'. In any event, economists constituted the largest group in the early Society. They dominated the organization until 1945, after which historians constituted the largest disciplinary group.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of the social science specialization of the Agricultural History Society's membership, much of the early work in the field reflected a narrow perspective and a policy orientation. Or, their work served as descriptive, factual narratives. Those who published in the early issues of *Agricultural History*, inaugurated in 1927, reflected the interdisciplinary interest in the subject. L. C. Gray, an economist in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, wrote the first original article published in that journal. He titled it 'The market surplus problems of colonial tobacco'. This, and similar work, usually reflected the historical interests of government employees in relation to specific research problems or their vocational interests rather than a focused, long-term, systematic research programme in agricultural history. So far as gender is concerned, in 1932 Kathleen Bruce became the first woman to publish in *Agricultural History* with an article entitled 'Virginia agricultural decline to 1860'.<sup>6</sup>

In 1942, Everett E. Edwards reflected the past concerns and purposes of those who pursued agricultural history. In his presidential address to the Agricultural History Society, Edwards contended, 'Although the conditions of today may be somewhat different from those of

<sup>4</sup> Wayne D. Rasmussen, 'Forty years of agricultural history', *Agricultural Hist.* 33 (1959), p. 179; Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The significance of the frontier in American history', *Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, 1893 (1894), pp. 199–227.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur G. Peterson, 'The Agricultural History Society's first quarter century', *Agricultural Hist.* 19 (1945), pp. 193–5; Rasmussen, 'Forty years of agricultural history', p. 177; Lyman Carrier, *The beginnings of agriculture in America* (1923); Harold D. Woodman, 'The state of agricultural history', in Herbert J. Bass (ed.), *The state of American history* (1970), pp. 220–4.

<sup>6</sup> Woodman, 'The state of agricultural history', p. 222; Edwards, 'Agricultural history and the development of agriculture', pp. 130, 132–3. See, for example,

Alfred Charles True, *A history of agricultural experimentation and research in the United States, 1607–1925, including a history of the United States Department of Agriculture* (1937); Percy Wells Bidwell and J. I. Falconer, *History of agriculture in the northern United States, 1620–1860* (1925); Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of agriculture in the southern United States to 1860* (1933); Everett E. Edwards, 'American agriculture: the first three hundred years', *United States Department of Agriculture Yearbook*, 1940; L. C. Gray, 'The market surplus problems of colonial agriculture', *Agricultural Hist.* 2 (1928); Kathleen Bruce, 'Virginia agricultural decline to 1860', *Agricultural Hist.* 6 (1932), pp. 3–13. In 1975, Mary Hargreaves became the first woman president of the Agricultural History Society.

yesterday, they have been definitely shaped by forces operating in the past'. Edwards believed those who studied agricultural history would be better able to understand the present. He wrote:

For an understanding of agricultural problems, historical research affords valuable and necessary perspective. It delineates the more permanent forces from the temporary factors and provides the basis for widening the sympathies, steadying the judgment, and enlarging the experience of those who are charged with the task and opportunity of securing for agriculture an adequate place in the life of the nation.

The result would be a 'demonstrably utilitarian' agricultural history. Thus, Edwards, too, advocated the study of agricultural history for improving public policy.<sup>7</sup>

Despite perceptions about its origins and purpose, agricultural history as a field developed from the study of local history because it is impossible to write the broad story of American history without knowing the details that permit generalization. The multidisciplinary and later interdisciplinary interests of those engaged in the pursuit of American agricultural history, however, have kept the field amorphous and unstructured, although much of the published work has emphasized economic and political affairs. Indeed, American agricultural history remains a field where the definition has been vague and its boundaries limitless, particularly with the emergence of the new rural social history as a subfield during the 1970s. Even so, agricultural historiography has made its greatest contributions to our understanding of the American experience in six major areas, each of which will be considered in turn: land policy, including tenancy; the South, slavery and tenancy; agricultural organizations, particularly the People's Party; the development of commercial agriculture; government policy; and rural history. This is not to say that important contributions have not been made concerning various economic, scientific and technological developments, particularly regarding production agriculture or for understanding the changing nature of gender roles in agriculture. In many respects, these matters always must be considered when discussing the broader categories above. Nevertheless, agricultural historians have created subfields in these subject areas that have challenged scholars to ask new questions, develop new methodologies, and offer insightful and sometimes challenging interpretations of American history.<sup>8</sup>

## I

Anyone who studies American agricultural historiography cannot ignore the importance of land policy, and the works of Paul Wallace Gates remain the starting point for anyone studying this topic. Gates saw federal land policy as detrimental to the small-scale, family farmer and a calculated effort by Congress to aid wealthy speculators, which, in turn, hindered western settlement from the Land Act of 1785 to the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934. Gates drew a congregation of graduate students who followed his interest in land policy but not necessarily his interpretation. Many of those scholars have emphasized the significance of tenancy as a product

<sup>7</sup> Edwards, 'Agricultural history and the Department of Agriculture', pp. 134–36.

<sup>8</sup> Woodman, 'The state of agricultural history',

p. 220; John L. Shover, *First majority-last minority. The transformation of rural life in America* (1976), pp. 506, 511.

of land policy. The study of land policy has also provoked considerable disagreement among scholars, and the historiography has gone through three phases. Some scholars argued that tenancy was a natural, but unfortunate, result of the disappearance of the relatively cheap frontier lands in the public domain as well as the decline in unoccupied arable land. Gates, however, contended that tenancy resulted from misguided federal land policies, largely due to the influence of speculators on Congress, which, in turn, permitted the moneyed interests to exploit small-scale farmers and earn handsome returns from rents while preventing their tenants from advancing into the property owning class. Others have considered tenancy a rational and socially acceptable economic position, which farm men and women accepted while they accumulated capital to purchase their own land. No matter their interpretations, scholars primarily have directed their attention toward tenancy in the South and Midwest.<sup>9</sup>

Agricultural economists first turned scholarly attention to tenancy during the early twentieth century. They were interested in the causes of tenancy in the Midwest, which they primarily attributed to the disappearance of free land under the Homestead Act, the end of the frontier, and the rise in land values. They believed that tenancy was inefficient and worried that it violated the Jeffersonian ideal of a society and government based on a class of independent, landowning farmers. But, they were interested in tenancy only as a matter of policy, that is, to determine how tenancy could be reversed, if not eliminated, from American agriculture. They did not levy blame, but they recommended long-term government credit policies to help tenants purchase land, such as the creation of the federal Land Bank in 1916 and various agricultural credit programmes in the 1920s.<sup>10</sup>

During the 1930s, Gates challenged this interpretation by arguing that tenancy was an early and common feature of agriculture across the Midwest long before the end of the public domain. He argued that tenancy was a product of an 'incongruous land system' that permitted speculators, land companies, and large-scale landholders to purchase great blocks of public domain and wait for settlement to drive up land prices. Then, they divided their large holdings into small farms for rent to individuals who could neither purchase a large tract of public domain or a smaller acreage of more expensive private land. As a result, tenancy prevented the creation of an independent, landowning class of small-scale, family farmers. Gates contended that tenancy became established in the prairie states because of the activities of land speculators and moneylenders. He wrote:

The loan sharks and speculators who were forced to rent their possessions to tenants in order to meet taxes and other costs, the persons seeking to establish great landed estates for themselves and their families, and the large-scale farmers all had a share in introducing a system ... condemned as both un-American and undemocratic.

As land values rose, farmers who purchased acreage, usually at usurious interest rates, often lost

<sup>9</sup> Paul W. Gates, *History of public land law development* (1968; repr. 1979); id., *Landlords and tenants on the Prairie frontier* (1973); Donald Winters, 'Agricultural tenancy in the nineteenth-century Middle West: the historiographical debate', *Indiana Magazine of History* 78 (1982), p. 128. Other historians made careers studying

land policy see, for example, the works of George L. Anderson, Vernon Carstensen, David Ellis, William Greever, Thomas Leduc, Arthur C. Reynolds, and Benjamin Hibbard.

<sup>10</sup> Winters, 'Agricultural tenancy', pp. 128–29, 147.

those lands when agricultural prices fell. As a result, land speculators and moneylenders combined 'to depress many farm owners into a tenant class'. Little wonder, then, that he argued the federal government bore 'responsibility for this early appearance and rapid growth of tenancy'. Thus, tenancy was not unavoidable as the agricultural economists had contended but rather the result of a poorly planned public land policy that favoured the rich rather than the establishment of a democratic system of landownership. Indeed, Gates wrote that federal land policy 'had not established democratic farm ownership but had produced a system at variance with American democratic ideals', thereby preventing the creation of a class of independent, landowning farmers. He extended his interpretation of American land law to California, where he concluded that it created a 'land of the corporate-agribusiness farm'.<sup>11</sup>

Gates, of course, interpreted the problem of American land policy and tenancy from the perspective of the 1930s when farm foreclosures during the Great Depression plagued the countryside. Historians quickly placed the blame on the moneyed interests – speculators and creditors – for many of the farm problems during that decade as well as for placing American agriculture on the road to ruin, especially through forced tenancy. These scholars also wanted to use history to influence public policy, particularly to right the wrongs of the past by checking the power of the moneyed interests. Ideology rather than economic theory became the basis for their explanations of cause and effect.<sup>12</sup>

Gates's interpretation of American land policy and the rise of tenancy carried considerable influence until the 1950s when it came under attack. The challenge to his interpretation came most forcefully and convincingly from Margaret Beattie Bogue and Allan G. Bogue. In 1959, Margaret Bogue argued in *Patterns from the Sod* that land policy was not the reason for agricultural tenancy in central Illinois. Rather than oppress farmers, tenancy enabled young men and women who had little capital to begin farming. By the twentieth century, 'tenancy had assumed a permanent and useful function for many landholders and would-be farmers'. Allan Bogue agreed, writing that tenancy was one of the 'vital parts of the midwestern agricultural system'. Farmers rented land 'because they did not have the funds with which to purchase a farm for themselves, or in some cases the means to develop their own small holdings rapidly enough to insure an income in their first years' residence in a new community'. Allan Bogue employed statistical methodology to argue that tenancy did not keep farmers from moving up the agricultural ladder. He contended that tenancy was a 'step up the tenure ladder,

<sup>11</sup> Paul W. Gates, 'The homestead law in an incongruous land system', *American Historical Rev.* 41 (1936), pp. 652–81; Gates, *Landlords and tenants*, pp. 139, 166, 300–1; Winters, 'Agricultural tenancy', pp. 130–2, 147–8; Allan G. Bogue, 'The heirs of James C. Malin: a grasslands historiography', *Great Plains Q.* 1 (1981), p. 114; Paul W. Gates, 'Public land disposal in California', *Agricultural Hist.* 49 (1975), p. 159; Jeremy Atack, 'Tenants and yeomen in the nineteenth century', in Morton Rothstein and Daniel Field (eds), *Quantitative studies in agrarian history* (1993), p. 3. For a discussion of

Spanish land grants in California and New Mexico see W. W. Robinson, *Land in California. The story of mission lands, ranchos, squatters, mining claims, railroad grants, land scrip, and homestead* (1948; repr. 1979); Victor Westphall, *The public domain in New Mexico, 1844–1891* (1965). See also Jim B. Pearson, *The Maxwell land grant* (1961); Victor Westphall, *Mercades Reales. Hispanic land grants of the Upper Rio Grande region* (1983) and Charles L. Briggs and John R. Van Ness, *Land, water, and culture. New perspectives on Hispanic land grants* (1987).

<sup>12</sup> Winters, 'Agricultural tenancy', p. 133.

which carried them from their original status as hired men to positions where they not only owned their farm homes but often owned rental property as well'.<sup>13</sup>

Still, a major challenge to Gates's thesis did not come until 1968 when Robert P. Swierenga, using Iowa as a case study, argued that little evidence existed to prove that large-scale speculators, who had purchased public domain, sought only to rent their lands to farmers. Instead, Swierenga argued that speculators preferred to sell their lands rather than encumber their acreages with tenant leases that might hinder sales. Using economic theory and quantitative methodology, he showed that speculators sold their lands as quickly as possible. By providing credit to tenants for the purchase of their lands, the large-scale owners sped, rather than delayed, the movement of tenants to the landowning class.<sup>14</sup>

During the late 1970s, Donald Winters also argued that while speculators increased in Iowa during the late nineteenth century, they were not the cause of tenancy. Winters found no relationship between tenancy and land speculation. He contended that farmers became tenants because they wanted to investigate the area before they purchased land and because land values rose to high levels based on expectations and improvements rather than actual productivity. He also held that new farmers did not want to pay those high prices, and they had little investment capital. Moreover, Winters maintained that tenancy enabled many farmers to ascend the agricultural ladder to land-ownership. Simply put, tenancy served a 'critical function' in agricultural development when farmers placed an emphasis on profits from cash grains rather than land-ownership. In this respect, speculators enhanced the creation and settlement of farms. They encouraged immigration and paid taxes that supported schools and local government. Winters also held that farmers used tenancy to acquire the capital needed to purchase land. In addition, he argued that rental agreements 'expressed objectives and interests of tenants and landlords alike and reflected the adaptation of both groups to the economic circumstances of a particular place at a particular time'. For Winters, tenancy did not mean exploitation but rather a means to help farmers gain land. He called tenancy in Iowa 'a viable and necessary institution'.<sup>15</sup>

As early as the 1960s, however, Gates had begun to recast his view of speculation, tenancy, and the federal land-disposal system. In 1964, he wrote that homesteaders were the 'beneficiaries of a liberal, generous and enlightened land system whatever its weakness', and he later held that 'the public domain had been so disposed of as to increase the class of small landowners, as Jefferson had desired'. In the late 1970s, he praised American land policy for providing 'flexibility', particularly for farmers who sought to develop farms larger than permitted by the Homestead Act alone.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 133, 135; Margaret Beattie Bogue, *Patterns from the sod. The land use and tenure in the Grand Prairie, 1850–1900* (Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, 34, 1959); Allan G. Bogue, *From prairie to corn belt. Farming on the Illinois and Iowa Prairies in the nineteenth century* (1963; repr. 1994), p. 56; id., 'Farming in the Prairie Peninsula, 1830–1890', *JECH* 23 (1963), p. 26.

<sup>14</sup> Winters, 'Agricultural tenancy', p. 136; Robert P. Swierenga, *Pioneers and profits. Land speculation on the Iowa frontier* (1968).

<sup>15</sup> Donald L. Winters, *Farmers without farms. Agricultural tenancy in nineteenth-century Iowa* (1978), p. 108; id., 'Agricultural tenancy', pp. 137–38, 142, 144; id., 'Tenancy as an economic institution. The growth and distribution of agricultural tenancy in Iowa', *JECH* 37 (1977), pp. 382–408.

<sup>16</sup> Paul W. Gates, 'The homestead law in Iowa', *Agricultural Hist.* 37 (1964), p. 78; id., *History of public land law development*, p. 771; id., 'Homesteading in the High Plains', *Agricultural Hist.* 51 (1977), p. 109.

In the early 1990s, the economist Jeremy Attack, provided a slightly different interpretation of government land policy and tenancy. Attack argued that rising tenancy in the northern United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was part of an evolutionary process of landholding. He attributed the problem of tenancy after 1860 to lack of capital and rising land values. Federal land policy in the form of the Homestead Act and other essentially free land acts 'minimized entry costs [and] reduced the increase of tenancy'. Government land policy, then, promoted land-ownership, not farm tenancy.<sup>17</sup>

## II

The South has been another major area of interest for agricultural historians, primarily for the study of slavery and tenancy. Slavery has been a persisting concern of historians and no matter the emphasis, it all relates to agriculture. The most important and controversial studies that have contributed to the field of agricultural history are the institutional studies of Eugene Genovese, whose path breaking work *The political economy of slavery* (1965) began an intensive debate about slavery in relation to capitalism and profitability. Genovese argued that slaveholders formed an anti-bourgeoisie class in a capitalist, market-driven world. He considered slavery a social rather than an economic system. He contended that 'the Old South ... must be understood as a historically discrete slave society the basic tendencies of which were antibourgeois despite being embodied in a capitalist and world market'. Slaveholders constituted a 'premodern' class whose ideology and morals precluded the sharing of national and state power with the northern bourgeoisie. For Genovese, the central issue of agricultural slavery concerned the political power of the master class, not economic returns, that is, profits. The slaveholders constituted a 'distinct ruling class'. Slavery, then, was 'anti-industrial, patriarchal, anti-urban, inward looking, and socially retrogressive'. Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman joined this debate with *Time on the Cross* (1974). They contended, primarily using statistical analysis, that slavery persisted because it was highly profitable as well as an efficient agricultural labour system.<sup>18</sup>

Kenneth M. Stamp and Stephen Oakes have also published important institutional histories that spawned a host of studies that continue to give new perspectives on the slave family and daily life. Indeed, the best study of agricultural slavery, broadly conceived, remains Stamp's *The Peculiar Institution* because it covers both economic affairs, including the slave trade, and daily social life. Stamp considered slavery profitable, if not efficient. Many historians, however, argue that slavery prevented the development of the southern economy in terms of manufacturing, transportation, and trade. Yet, few scholars admit that planters traded equitably and by choice with the North. Indeed, the planters made a calculated decision to invest in slaves instead of any alternative economic infrastructure for the South. Slavery and the agriculture on which it was based gave the planters the economic option that they preferred. Certainly, the

<sup>17</sup> Attack, 'Tenants and yeomen in the nineteenth century', p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> Eugene Genovese, *The political economy of slavery. Studies in the economy and society of the slave South*

(1965), pp. xvii, xix, 319, 320; Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the cross. The economics of American Negro slavery* (1974), pp. 4–5.

absence of an adequate and affordable free labour supply and mechanization of the cotton crop limited their choices, but they had choices nonetheless, and they chose a dependable and amply rewarding system and institution that provided profit.<sup>19</sup>

Stephen Oakes ranks among recent historians who have interpreted agricultural slavery and the plantation system as capitalist ventures, although he modified his interpretation by contending that slavery was always more than an economic system because planters considered it essential for their status and class. As a result, they often made decisions based on social and class needs, rather than good economics and financial analysis. Essentially, then, slavery was more of a political than an economic category because it involved the 'distribution of power in society'.<sup>20</sup>

By the late twentieth century, scholars had begun to make important contributions about slavery and the law as well as the geographical changes in plantation agriculture since the Civil War. They were also studying the social, economic, and political changes in the South that affected the relationship of African Americans to the agriculture between the First and Second Reconstructions, that is, from 1865 to approximately 1970. Peter Wood, Daniel Littlefield, and Judith A. Carney have shown the African contributions to American agriculture, particularly for rice cultivation, through slavery, while Edmund S. Morgan addressed the ambivalence of planters to the institution. Joyce Chaplin and Allan Kulikoff have explored slavery in relation to commercial agriculture in the South Carolina Low Country and the Chesapeake.<sup>21</sup>

Agricultural historians have also spent considerable time analyzing sharecropping and tenancy regarding labour contracts, lien laws, and productivity. Although economic in context, the best of these studies recognize the omnipresent matter of racism and its role in preventing a truly free-market economy from developing in the post-Civil War South. These historians have been quick to note the non-economic forces that affected the agricultural economy, such as Jim Crow laws, coercion, and racial violence, all of which were legacies of slavery and contributed to the creation of inefficient agricultural production and monopolistic credit systems. As a result, post-Civil War southern agriculture fostered overproduction, low prices, and poverty, which ensured an agricultural system that resisted reform and perpetuated economic stagnation. Cliometricians have conducted much of this research, although other historians have used behavioural analysis that enabled the discussion of southern tenancy beyond the significance of form or theory filling data. Collectively, their work has shown the transformation of the plantation and agricultural labour system based on new economic and social relationships from the antebellum period to the post-war years.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth M. Stampp, *The peculiar institution. Slavery in the ante-bellum South* (1965).

<sup>20</sup> Stephen Oakes, *The ruling race. A history of American slaveholders* (1982); id., *Slavery and freedom. An interpretation of the slave South* (1990), p. xvi.

<sup>21</sup> Peter H. Wood, *Black majority. Negroes in South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (1974); Daniel Littlefield, *Rice and slaves. Ethnicity and the slave trade in colonial South Carolina* (1981); Judith A. Carney, *Black rice. The African origins of rice cultivation in the Americas* (2001); Philip D. Morgan, *Slave counterpoint. Black culture in the eighteenth-century Chesapeake and*

*Lowcountry* (1998); Joyce E. Chaplin, *An anxious pursuit. Agricultural innovation and modernity in the lower South, 1730–1815* (1993); Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and slaves. The development of southern cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680–1800* (1986). See also Thomas D. Morris, *Southern slavery and the law, 1619–1860* (1996) and Ira Berlin, *Generations of captivity. A history of african-american slaves* (2003).

<sup>22</sup> Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One kind of freedom. The economic consequences of Emancipation* (1977), p. xiii; Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South. Revolutions in the southern economy since the Civil War* (1986).

Harold Woodman succinctly summarized the transformation from slavery to tenancy and sharecropping when he wrote:

Thus the new South might best be seen as an evolving bourgeoisie society in which a capitalistic social structure was arising on the ruins of a pre-modern slave society. It was going through the process of social change, of modernization that the rest of the nation had gone through a half century or earlier. But where the rest of the nation had made the change with a social and political structure and an ideology that generally supported such changes, the postwar South was going through the change with the remnants of a social and political structure and an ideology that had been antagonistic to such changes. While slavery, the institution that had been at the core of that non-modern ideology and social structure, had been forcibly extinguished, this culture and ideology lingered and gave the new society that emerged a peculiar, southern form.

Put simply, tenancy in the South nourished and perpetuated the exploitation of labour, social control, and rural poverty rather than provided a means to land ownership and economic mobility.<sup>23</sup>

### III

Populism also has been a major area of study, and no other topic in American agricultural historiography has generated such a multiplicity of interpretations and perspectives. Populism did not attract major attention until 1931 when John D. Hicks provided an economic and political history of the movement that set the interpretive standard and consensus about the Populists for nearly a generation. Following Hicks, many historians of midwestern agriculture tended to see farmers as well meaning patriarchs, who struggled to overcome economic forces beyond their control.<sup>24</sup>

In 1955, however, Richard Hofstadter argued that farmers looked backward to a past where they had greater control of their lives, and their conservatism often proved reactionary. Hofstadter challenged the interpretations of historians who considered the Populists a progressive economic, social, and political force. He contended they were reactionaries who longed to return to a bygone age when their lives were untouched by both government and corporate America, much in contrast to Hick's interpretation that the Populists were left-of-center on the political spectrum and a progressive force in late nineteenth-century America.<sup>25</sup>

In 1962, however, Norman Pollack provided the best challenge to Hofstadter by arguing that the Populists were a progressive social force that offered the last, best hope for radical, political change in a socialist direction that would protect the general welfare and democracy in the United States. He later moderated that interpretation by calling Populism 'a movement of reform, not radicalism'. Overall, the Populists sought 'a more humane political and social

<sup>23</sup> Harold D. Woodman, 'Sequel to slavery. The new history views the postbellum South', *J. Southern Hist.* 43 (1977), pp. 535–6, 554; Gilbert C. Fite, *Cotton fields no more. Southern agriculture, 1865–1980* (1984); Pete Daniel, *Breaking the land. The transformation of cotton, tobacco,*

*and rice cultures since 1880* (1985); Edward L. Ayers, *The promise of the new South. Life after reconstruction* (1992).

<sup>24</sup> John D. Hicks, *The populist revolt* (1931).

<sup>25</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The age of reform. From Bryan to FDR* (1955).

order', guaranteed by a national government that privileged the rights of the individual and general welfare over monopolistic capitalism and the political power that it generated.<sup>26</sup>

Earlier, during the 1950s, Victor Ferkiss caused a stir by likening the Populists to Fascists because of their anti-Semitism and hatred of British bankers and eastern creditors. After considerable debate, Walter Nugent put this view to rest by convincingly arguing that the Populists were not anti-Semitic, xenophobic, or bigots. Nugent contended that Populism was 'a political response to economic distress', and many Populists were first- or second-generation immigrants. Simply put, the Populists 'were people who were seeking the solution of concrete economic distress through the instrumentality of a political party ... This involved profoundly the political cooperation of the foreign-born, and it involved a deep respect and receptivity for new American institutions and ideas'. Nevertheless, much remained to be said about the Populists.<sup>27</sup>

During the 1960s, some historians, such as Stanley Parsons, used statistical methods to identify, quantify, and determine whether the Populists were farmers or merchants as well as whether they lived in the country or towns. He concluded that the Populists were 'outmaneuvered, outfought, and outwitted by more sophisticated village and urban groups who were more in tune with the growing industrial and commercial economy'. Parsons argued, 'the vaunted yeoman was usually content to follow the policies and leadership of the village and urban business and professional classes. It was these men, not farmers, who wielded the power in late nineteenth-century politics'.<sup>28</sup>

In 1976, Lawrence Goodwyn, a journalist working in academia, renewed the interest in the People's Party when he argued that the real Populists emerged from the cooperative movement of the Southern Farmers' Alliance. By ignoring Nebraska, or at least calling the agrarian revolt in that state a 'shadow movement' because it lacked a cooperative tradition, he challenged a host of scholars to look anew at Populism in the West. They did, and they largely disagreed with his interpretation.<sup>29</sup>

Robert C. McMath challenged Goodwyn's work by arguing that while the cooperative movement was important for the radicalization of the Populists, the movement had greater social and cultural roots and significance than Goodwyn admitted. McMath wrote

the picnics, rallies, and camp meetings had more than recreational value. Except for the encampments, they were traditional focal points of political expression, and they provided the Alliance with a means of mobilizing political sentiment without appearing to violate its nonpartisan position. In 1889 and 1890, the order used such gatherings to measure candidates by the Alliance yardstick, and in 1891 and 1892, they provided a base from which to organize the People's Party.<sup>30</sup>

Gene Clanton has provided the best study of Populists in Congress. He found them to be

<sup>26</sup> Norman Pollack, *The populist response to industrial America. Midwestern populist thought* (1962). See also id., *The just polity. Populism, law, and human welfare* (1987) and *The humane economy. Populism, capitalism and democracy* (1990).

<sup>27</sup> Victor Ferkiss, 'Populist influences on American Fascism', *Western Political Q.* 10 (1957), pp. 350-73; Walter Nugent, *The tolerant populists. Kansas populism*

and nativism (1963), pp. 233, 243.

<sup>28</sup> Stanley B. Parsons, *The populist context. Rural versus urban power on the Great Plains frontier* (1973), pp. 145-6.

<sup>29</sup> Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise. The populist moment in America* (1976).

<sup>30</sup> Robert C. McMath, *American Populism. A social history, 1877-1898* (1993), pp. 145-6.

articulate exponents of the party's platform. Clanton also argued that Populists sought important economic, social, and political changes that would have substantially benefited the general welfare. Other scholars, such as Stephen Hahn, have investigated the social rather than the economic origins of Populism. They have stressed the importance of race and class in relation to the penetration of the market economy in the Georgia backcountry and the resulting conflict between town and country and merchants and planters with small-scale landowners and tenants, white and black. They also have been interested in the conflict of the market economy with cooperative labour and production by small-scale 'petty producers'. Hahn also argued that the destruction of slavery led to the creation of a new class of landowning farmers who insisted on agricultural production for the market. For Hahn, market agriculture resulted from political conflict to regulate class struggle rather than economic forces.<sup>31</sup>

#### IV

The development of commercial agriculture and the market economy is another major topic and interpretive area that has attracted considerable interest, particularly in relation to when farmers actually forsook self-sufficiency and began producing for profit. Essentially, it centers on the definition of capitalism and whether scholars interpret American agricultural history in the light of neoclassical economics, or social history and anthropology, a division that Allan Kulikoff has made between 'market historians' and 'social historians'. During the late 1970s, historians began giving substantive thought to this problem when James A. Henretta took issue with James T. Lemon about the significance of the market to eighteenth-century farmers. Lemon argued that ordinary farmers intentionally produced enough grain, vegetables, eggs, milk, butter, and other commodities to meet the food needs of their families and sold the surplus to buy necessities. Henretta argued that the sale of surplus products did not constitute evidence that farmers were committed to a market economy. He contended that market sales were a secondary rather than a primary consideration: the 'surplus was what was left over after the yearly subsistence requirements of the farm household had been met'. Rather, farmers who did not have access to markets produced for local exchange, that is, barter with other farm men and women, merchants, and artisans. In these cases, the value of the product exchanged depended on what it was worth to a particular individual. Henretta further argued that farm families invariably chose the security of diversified production rather than to hire labour, produce a surplus, or specialize. He wrote: 'Economic gain was important to these men and women, but it was not their major concern. It was subordinated to (or encompassed by) two other goals: the yearly subsistence and the long-run financial security of the family unit'. Indeed, he wrote, 'The maximizing of profit was less important to these producers than the meeting of household needs and the maintaining of established social relationships within the community'. The extended farm family, not the market, served as the most important socioeconomic unit in early American agriculture. This focus on the farm family replicated the

<sup>31</sup> Gene Clanton, *Congressional populism and the crisis of the 1890s* (1998); Steven Hahn, *The roots of southern populism. Yeoman farmers and the transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850–1890* (1983). See also Barton C. Shaw, *The Wool-Hat Boys. Georgia's populist party* (1984).

*Annales* tradition, and it emphasized the significance of patriarchy and patrimony in American agriculture.<sup>32</sup>

Allan Kulikoff has given similar voice to Henretta's thesis, and he has even projected it into the twentieth century. Kulikoff particularly argued that farmers in eighteenth-century America avoided the market economy by producing only enough to pay taxes and provide necessities while relying on family labour, domestic production, and family and kin networks for trade to remain free from debt and retain their independence. Kulikoff bases his interpretation on Marxist theory to explain the social and economic actions of farmers. For him, social, as opposed to economic historians who rest their interpretation on the forces of neoclassical economics, 'all seek to uncover patterns of economic and social behavior of ordinary rural people and to relate their behavior to the social relations of production and to social and political consciousness'. Kulikoff further contends that Marxian theory

gives the agrarian critics of capitalism a new voice, capturing their noncapitalist familial relations and intense non-market gift exchanges of goods and labour with neighbors. It suggests violence preceded the victory of capitalists and thereby provides a powerful explanation for intermittent agrarian uprisings of independent landholding farmers (or those seeking that status) as diverse as New England-born New York tenants in the mid-eighteenth century and late nineteenth-century Populists of the cotton South and northern plains. And it points to cooperation and internal struggles with households over the sexual division of labour and exchanges between households.<sup>33</sup>

Kulikoff, however, recognized that 'A judicious synthesis of these two visions of economic exchange better describes American reality than either of the two alone'. He has contended, 'American farmers clearly lived within a dynamically growing capitalist world that encompassed the entire North Atlantic rim. Nearly all of them participated more or less in commodity markets to procure money to pay taxes and buy imported manufactured goods'. Yet, they did so only to protect their traditional farming activities that were not market driven. In other words, they participated in the market economy to protect themselves from capitalism. Kulikoff and others like him, then, rely on the social historians' interpretation of capitalist development, which emphasizes class struggle and the transition from a precapitalist and noncommercial economic order with conflict between non-commercial farmers and capitalist entrepreneurs, such as land speculators and moneylenders.<sup>34</sup>

In a study of the Connecticut Valley between 1780 and 1860, Christopher Clark similarly contended that household production and the local exchange economy rather than the market economy gave social order to agriculture in New England during the early nineteenth century. Farm families, he argued, sought household independence rather than profit. Similarly, Steven Hahn has applied the same interpretative framework to the South by arguing that the market

<sup>32</sup> James A. Henretta, 'Families and farms: *mentalité* in pre-industrial America', *William and Mary Q.* 35 (1978), pp. 16, 19; James T. Lemon, *The Best Poor Man's Country. A geographical study of early southeastern Pennsylvania* (1972); Allan Kulikoff, 'The transition to capitalism in America', *William and Mary Q.* 46 (1989), pp. 122, 126.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 122, 126–28; Christopher Clark, *The roots of rural capitalism. Western Massachusetts, 1780–1860* (1990). See also Allan Kulikoff, *The agrarian origins of American capitalism* (1992).

<sup>34</sup> Kulikoff, 'Transition to capitalism in America', p. 128.

economy for cotton diminished the independence of farmers in the Georgia upcountry, and during the post-Civil War period they fought government regulations and commercial agriculture in a failing effort to preserve their traditional life style based on the exchange economy.<sup>35</sup> By the early twenty-first century, these Marxist historians had begun to fade from scholarly fashion.

Other scholars, such as economist Winifred Rothenberg, have disputed the contentions of the 'social historians' as Kulikoff calls them, that is, those scholars who see agricultural production for kinship and local exchange as the 'moral economy' of the countryside and one that best provided for a farmer's family. Rothenberg has used statistical methodology to push back the date for the emergence of a market economy into the mid-eighteenth century. This debate is important not only for what the research informs us about the past, but also because it shows how ideology can influence historical interpretation. Rothenberg forcefully offered a neoclassical economic analysis of the market economy in Massachusetts. She contended that farmers actively and willingly sought markets and, by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they had fully committed to commercial agriculture. 'Massachusetts,' she wrote, 'did not begin as an experiment in self-sufficiency. The people who settled this land came from a tradition of Market Crosses, Market Days, Corn Markets, cattle, wool, cheese, silk and produce markets, stalls, shops, fairs, itinerant peddlers, and cattle drovers'. For Rothenberg, agriculture based on a social *mentalité* was difficult if not impossible to prove. It was merely wishful thinking by those who recreated a past based on their own ideological beliefs, not on factual evidence. Rothenberg's interpretation of the growth and transformation of American market agriculture has not been influenced by Marx. She has given little attention to class struggle in the development of markets, and Rothenberg has argued that farmers willingly sought markets for profit which, in turn, improved their standard of living.<sup>36</sup>

Projecting this debate into the twentieth century, Mary Neth has contended that family and community ties were more important than the market economy to farmers in the Midwest prior to 1940. She also argues that women primarily emphasized the 'mutuality of kin and community', ties that were more important than the market economy for farmers. By so doing 'they increased the communal resources available to farm men as well. In times of crisis, farm people relied on these informal local relations for security'. She has written,

Farm people did not simply sell products for cash; they also produced goods that could be used directly on the farm or by the family or could be exchanged to meet the needs of entire neighborhoods. Profits from cash markets were unpredictable because prices and weather were beyond the control of farm people; profits and production for home use and neighborhood exchange were stable and helped assure survival.

Neth has also argued that women primarily emphasized the 'mutuality of kin and community'.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Steven Hahn, 'The 'unmaking' of the southern yeomanry of the Georgia Upcountry, 1860–1890', in Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude (eds), *The countryside in the age of capitalist transformation. Essays in the social history of rural America* (1985), p. 186.

<sup>36</sup> Winifred B. Rothenberg, 'The market and Massachusetts farmers, 1750–1855', *JECH* 41 (1981), p. 312. See also id., *From market-place to a market economy. The*

*transformation of rural Massachusetts, 1750–1850* (1992); Paul G. E. Clemens, *The Atlantic economy and colonial Maryland's eastern shore. From tobacco to grain* (1980) and Gloria Main, *Tobacco colony. Life in early Maryland, 1650–1720* (1982).

<sup>37</sup> Mary Neth, *Preserving the family farm. Women, community, and the foundations of agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900–1940* (1995), pp. 2–3.

## V

Another major area for inquiry and disagreement involves the formulation of agricultural policy. No other subject has had so many scholarly disciplines represented – political scientists, economists, rural sociologists, and historians. Their work primarily has dealt with specific policy issues, such as the McNary-Haugen Act, New Deal programmes, and the congressional machinations of enactment. However, they have given some attention to the policy-making roles of associations, such as the American Farm Bureau Federation, Farmers Union, and National Farmers Organization. Here, too, we find considerable interpretive differences based on ideological premises. Usually these disagreements center on whether the federal government should be an active regulator of the farm economy or merely helpful in terms of marketing and research to improve production. Historians have taken a more descriptive and narrative approach to policy history, while the economists, political scientists, and, to an extent the rural sociologists, have been more critical advocates, especially when evaluating New Deal-based policies. The works of Donald and Robert Paarlberg, economist and political scientist respectively, and Neil Harl, an agricultural economist, provide an example of the sharpest division of scholarly opinion about price support, marketing, and acreage reduction policies. My own work emphasizes the dependency of farmers on the federal government and their reliance on federal farm policy to maintain viable operations.<sup>38</sup>

## VI

The last and relatively new area for historical research in American agricultural history involves rural social history. During the 1970s this subfield became popular, when scholars began looking at farmers in terms of social and cultural relationships, that is, communities and institutions, instead of emphasizing economics and politics, such as production, monetary policy, technology, agricultural organizations, and government policies. The new rural historians have stressed the importance of social structures, processes, institutions, and behaviour, and they focused on ordinary people not elites. Peter Argersinger argued that agricultural historians had become too narrow in their research and that they remained ‘hampered by the older shortcomings of frontier and agricultural history: the concentration upon the West as an area and the reduction to agricultural economics, with the resulting loss of either conceptual clout or general interest’. The new rural historians asserted the importance of community, neighbourhood, and daily life. Writing in the early ’80s, Robert Swierenga led the challenge for historians to use quantitative, that is, statistical methodology to research land, tax, and probate records in the county courthouses as well as manuscript census schedules and to apply behavioural theories borrowed from sociologists, demographers, and ethnologists to understand the lives of country people, some of whom he called the ‘bottom half’ of society. Accordingly, Swierenga

<sup>38</sup> David Hamilton, *From new day to New Deal. American farm policy from Hoover to Roosevelt, 1928–1933* (1991); Robert A. Paarlberg and Don Paarlberg, ‘Agricultural policy in the twentieth century’, *Agricultural Hist.* 74 (2000), pp. 136–61; Neil Harl, *The farm crisis of the 1980s* (1990); John Mark Hansen, *Gaining access. Congress and the farm lobby, 1919–1981* (1991); William P. Browne, *The failure of national rural policy. Institutions and interests* (2001); R. Douglas Hurt, *Problems of plenty. The American farmer in the twentieth century* (2002).

urged the systematic study of the past using social science theory, that is, 'hypothesis testing', to investigate the actual lived experience of rural people over time in rural communities.<sup>39</sup>

Swierenga cast a broad net for capturing the rural historical experience. He has written how 'Rural history centers on the life-style and activities of farmers and villagers, their family patterns, farming practices, social structures, and community institutions'. He contended that scholars of agricultural history and the westward movement remained overly influenced by Frederick Jackson Turner and continued to stress the influence of the environment while neglecting the important story of rural communities. As a result, rural historians 'suffered from a distorted perspective of the meaning of rural life'. Swierenga has maintained that 'rural' does not merely denote an area or a form of society. Rather,

Rural life, as distinct from urban living, involves physical if not social isolation, large family networks, family work patterns, seasonal labour requirements, and other features. Historians of rural life must study these distinguishing marks of rurality, because rural America is characterized by social processes as much as by geographical place.

Simply put, Swierenga has argued for 'the holistic study of diverse rural communities' in which scholars focused on the 'continuity and discontinuity in human behavior, both individually and collectively'. Thus, rural history should be interdisciplinary. Perhaps more important for Swierenga agricultural history was an 'orphan' of rural history.<sup>40</sup>

Swierenga knew that he was not the first to think about agricultural history this way or to broaden it. In 1938, Harry J. Carman and Rexford G. Tugwell called on scholars to study rural social history. They urged historians to turn from their studies of great men and events to 'follow men and women in their everyday routines, to observe their work, their leisure, their happiness and sorrow; to see them plow and mow, chisel and hammer, bake and sow; to see their schools, their churches, and, above all, their homes'. Put simply, they urged historians to deal with the 'elusive stuff' of social life in the countryside. Architecture, religion, customs, leisure, and health in rural areas merited as much scholarly attention as agricultural technology and politics.<sup>41</sup>

During the late 1940s, James C. Malin also urged historians to study history as a whole within its cultural context. In fact, Malin may have been the first American agricultural historian to suggest that history should be written from the 'bottom up'. Malin stressed cultural factors that influenced human behaviour similar to the *mentalité* approach to rural history of the *Annales* scholars. Allan Bogue also had studied everyday farm life in a behavioural rather than economic context in *From Prairie to Cornbelt*. Bogue wrote that he focused on 'the man with dirt on his

<sup>39</sup> David Danbom, 'The professors and the plowmen in American history today', *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 69 (Winter, 1985–86), pp. 11–12; Peter H. Argeringer, 'The people's past. Teaching American rural history', *History Teacher* 10 (May 1977), p. 411; Robert P. Swierenga, 'The New Rural History. Defining the parameters', *Great Plains Q.* 1 (1981), p. 212; Robert P. Swierenga, 'Theoretical perspectives on the New Rural History. From environmentalism to modernization', *Agricultural Hist.* 56 (1982), pp. 495–6; See also Hal

S. Barron, 'Rediscovering the majority. The New Rural History of the nineteenth-century North', *Historical Stud.* 19 (1986), pp. 141–52.

<sup>40</sup> Swierenga, 'The New Rural History', pp. 212–13; id., 'Theoretical perspectives', pp. 496, 502; id., 'Towards the "New Rural History": a review essay', *Historical Methods Newsletter* 6 (June 1973), pp. 111–12.

<sup>41</sup> Harry J. Carman and Rexford G. Tugwell, 'The significance of American agricultural history', *Agricultural Hist.* 12 (1938), pp. 99, 100.

hands and dung on his boots – and the problems and developments that forced him to make decisions about his farm business'.<sup>42</sup>

Other scholars who did not see themselves as agricultural historians soon began focusing on everyday life at the family and local level, particularly in relation to rural life in the Midwest. Most notable were historian Hal Baron and economists Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, the latter of whom have used statistical analysis to provide perspective on daily agricultural life in the northern United States during the antebellum period. Some of these rural community studies have criticized government policy and the emphasis on the market economy for the loss of all that was good about rural life, although they are less precise about the alternatives.<sup>43</sup>

## VII

Today, the field of agricultural history remains as diffuse in its practitioners and topics of investigation as at the formal founding of the field in 1919 with the establishment of the Agricultural History Society. Historians, geographers, economists, sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists, and others write agricultural history today. By so doing, they help provide interdisciplinary perspectives to explain the past. Yet, the interdisciplinary diversity of the field remains both a strength and a weakness. It is beneficial to the field because a variety of scholarly disciplines have provided important perspectives about the past from many vantage points for nearly a century. The result has been an important multi- and interdisciplinary consideration of a host of topics – science, technology, production, marketing, government policy, religion, race, class, gender, and the family – in relation to American agricultural history. The weakness has been that these scholars often do not see themselves as part of a coherent whole, that is, as agricultural historians. Their work often remains isolated in their own disciplines. Historians who, in fact, have made important contributions to American agricultural history usually consider themselves labour, social, economic, or political scholars, rather than as agricultural historians. This phenomenon is due in part to the urban nature of American society and training of most historians, but it also reflects the fragmentation and specialization of interests within the profession. Moreover, agricultural history is not fashionable today. Few colleges and universities offer courses on American agricultural history, which has lost its importance just as farmers lost their prestige during the twentieth century.

Indeed, the study of agricultural history in the United States remains incredibly undervalued. Moreover, many scholars who work under the umbrella of rural history do not see agricultural history as one of the spines that help give their work shape and meaning. Essentially, they practice agricultural history without admitting or realizing it, probably because they see the field as pejoratively narrow for their self-definition and professional advancement and too far beyond

<sup>42</sup> Bogue, 'Heirs of James C. Malin', p. 109; Swierenga, 'Theoretical Perspectives', p. 500; Bogue, *From Prairie to Corn Belt*, p. 1. For an introduction to Malin's work see Robert P. Swierenga, 'James Malin', in *Historians of the American frontier. A bio-bibliographical sourcebook* (1988), pp. 384–407.

<sup>43</sup> Hal S. Barron, *Mixed harvest. The second great*

*transformation of the rural North, 1870–1930* (1997); Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, *To their own soil. Agriculture in the antebellum North* (1983); Jane Adams, *The transformation of rural life. Southern Illinois, 1890–1990* (1994). David Danbom also provided a survey of American rural history in *Born in the county. A history of rural America* (1995).

the mainstream concerns of scholars working in American history to wilfully accept such self-identification. But, this is a problem of training, location, residence, and periodic change of emphasis in their field of historical research not because agricultural history lacks scholarly legitimacy. However the parts are defined, agricultural history remains an important subfield in American historical inquiry.

The problem of field recognition has been no more fully appreciated and recognized than by James H. Shideler, who served as editor of *Agricultural History* from 1965 to 1984. Shideler did not consider agricultural history a field of study, primarily because scholars pursued it beyond the investigation of production agriculture. He wrote: 'Agricultural history, broadly defined, is diffuse, discursive, and incoherent; it has no discipline, no unique methodology. It is not even a sub discipline'. Shideler affirmed the opinion of Edwards who earlier contended that the Agricultural History Society intended the study of agricultural history to be interdisciplinary and 'to promote the field as a contribution to the better understanding of history in general rather than to set it apart as a separate discipline'.<sup>44</sup>

Shideler, however, was not the first historian to lament the amorphousness of American agricultural history as a field. In 1948, Rodney Loehr also went so far as to say that 'the history of agriculture merges insensibly into the totality of human experience'. Moreover, in 1973, Clarence Danhof, as president of the Agricultural History Society, worried that the goals of the organization as stated in the constitution were 'so inclusive as to provide no restraints upon the use of the very few resources available and little guidance to the selection of research objectives'. He argued for a tighter, more restrictive definition of agricultural history. 'Should not our small guild be able to make a greater contribution if we could agree on a set of boundaries less inclusive in character and more sharply defining the end products we seek for our efforts?' Fortunately, scholars ignored this call for restricting the field by imposing artificial parameters that limited the subjects that could be legitimately considered agricultural history. In fact, scholars expanded rather than restricted their interests in the field by broadening it to include rural social history in its many manifestations.<sup>45</sup>

If, then, one asks: 'What is American agricultural history? Where has it been? Where is it going?' the answers must necessarily be as complex as the questions. Beginning as an interdisciplinary policy and lesson-providing area for historical inquiry, it has ranged across the economic, social, political, and cultural landscape of the nation. Largely centered on economic inquiry in the past, by the early twenty-first century rural social history that emphasized community, culture, and gender, based on interdisciplinary research, had become a compelling and important component. Micro studies of township and county affairs remained popular in the journal and monograph literature, and economists who wrote agricultural history continued enamored with quantitative studies about labour, thresholds for technological change, and land values. State agricultural histories, however, have fallen from favour, because book publishers wanted greater breadth and popular appeal. Yet, any definition of American agricultural history

<sup>44</sup> James H. Shideler, 'Agricultural history studies: a retrospective view', in Frederick V. Carstensen, Morton Rothstein, and Joseph A. Swanson (eds), *Outstanding in his field. Perspectives on American agriculture in honor of*

Wayne D. Rasmussen (1993), pp. 3–4.

<sup>45</sup> Rodney C. Loehr, 'Agricultural history', *J. Farm Economics* 30 (1948), p. 537; Clarence H. Danhof, 'Wither agricultural history', *Agricultural Hist.* 47 (1973), p. 2.

as a field will be as diverse as the varied individuals asked to provide one. Essentially, then, while many scholars work in the field of agricultural history, but do not consider themselves agricultural historians, it is best to remember the words of Alfred Lord Tennyson who wrote in 'Ulysses', – 'that which we are we are'.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Alfred Lord Tennyson, 'Ulysses', in *Complete Poetical Works* (1963), p. 89.

# Fields, farms and sun-division in a moorland region, 1100–1400<sup>\*</sup>

by Richard Britnell

## *Abstract*

Earlier work combining the pre-Black Death charter evidence and post-medieval maps for county Durham has shown how extensive areas of waste survived in the county until the early modern period. This paper begins by considering the enclosed arable land of townships within the larger waste, showing how it was normally held in furlongs which often show evidence of subdivision according to the principles of sun-division. The right to graze the remaining waste is discussed. The Bishops of Durham were in the habit of granting enclosures from the waste by charter: the arable of these enclosed farms might also be divided by sun-division.

Recent research in the medieval archives of the bishopric and priory of Durham, in conjunction with cartographic evidence drawn from more recent periods, has established that in county Durham before the twelfth century, small townships, with their fields, were separated from each other by extensive tracts of waste. Land use was modified between the twelfth and early fourteenth centuries, especially in the less heavily settled parts of central Durham, by peasant clearing of new lands and the creation of hundreds of new, compact farms, but even in the early fourteenth century there remained large areas of moor, not only in the land rising west of the Wear, and above the Wear valley, but also in more easterly parts of the county. This abundance of colonizable land was characteristic of many parts of northern Britain: similar landscapes in West Yorkshire, Northumberland and Cumbria have been well described in recent studies, though from types of record different from those available in Durham.<sup>1</sup> Though many characteristics of such late colonized landscapes are best illustrated in a general overview, any detailed account of how these landscapes developed must rely on concentrations of more local evidence. This paper draws primarily on charter evidence to examine the development of the fields in a

<sup>\*</sup> This paper derives from a research grant (R000238362) awarded by the ESRC to Professor Brian Roberts and me between 1999 and 2002 for research into 'Settlement and waste in the Palatinate of Durham, 1150–1550'. An earlier version was prepared as my inaugural professorial lecture in the University of Durham. I am grateful to Professor Roberts, Dr Helen Dunsford, Dr Simon Harris, and two anonymous readers for comments and advice.

<sup>1</sup> Helen Dunsford and Simon Harris, 'Colonization and wasteland in County Durham, 1100–1400', *EcHR* 56 (2003), pp. 34–56; M. L. Faull and S. A. Moorhouse (eds), *West Yorkshire: an archaeological survey to 1500* (3 vols, 1981); R. A. Lomas, *County of conflict: Northumberland from Conquest to Civil War* (1996); Angus J. L. Winchester, *Landscape and society in medieval Cumbria* (1987); Brian K. Roberts, Helen Dunsford and Simon Harris, 'Framing medieval landscapes: region and place in County Durham', in C. D. Liddy and R. H. Britnell (eds), *North-eastern England in the Middle Ages* (forthcoming).

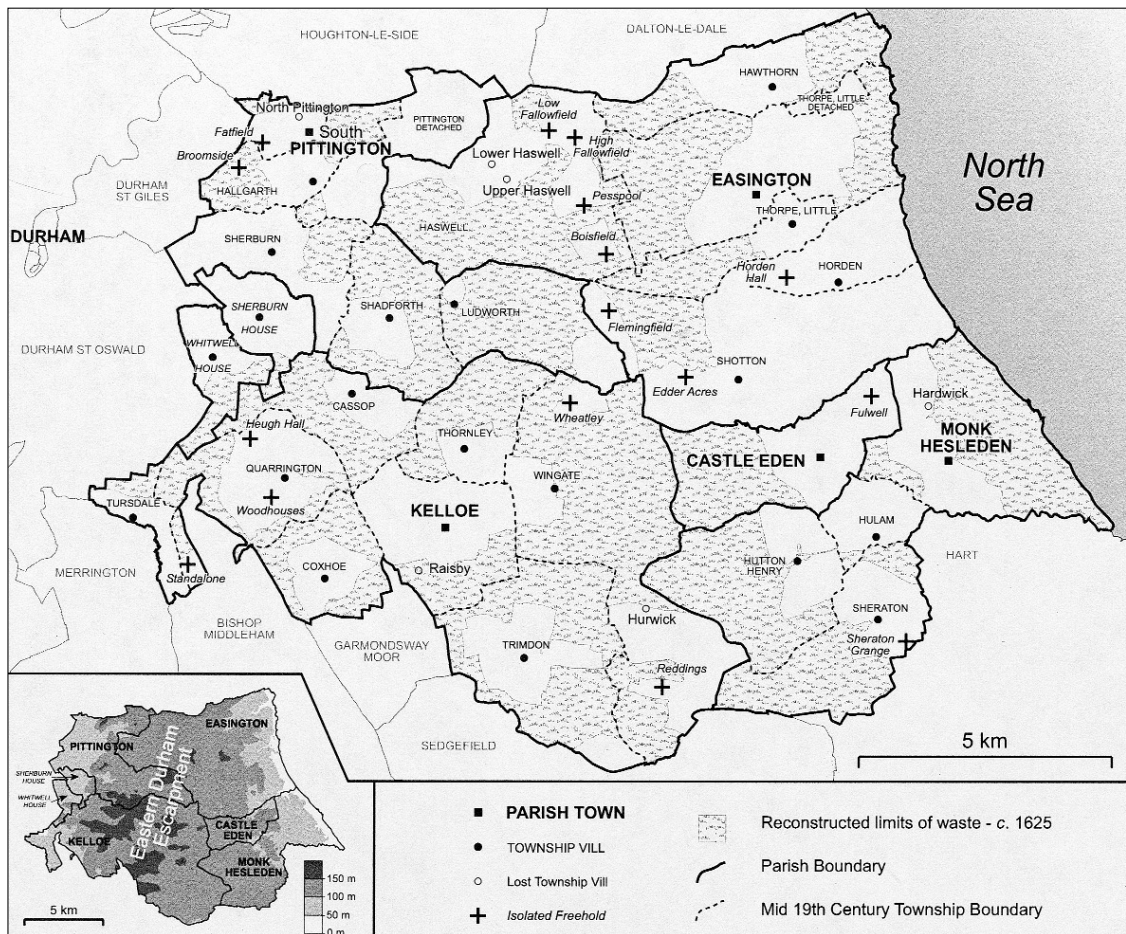


FIGURE 1. Parishes and townships between Durham and the North Sea.

region of extensive moorland, and to show the role of sun-division or *solskifte* in the sub-division of arable. It then considers the use of the moors both as common pasture and as land upon which to create new farms, which might themselves be subject to partition by sun-division.

The region in question, a portion of east Durham between the city of Durham and the sea (Figure 1), was chosen because it contains the township of Haswell, which has more extant charters than any other township in Durham County – 166, excluding duplicates.<sup>2</sup> Besides Haswell, the study includes the extant charters of 29 other neighbouring townships, so offers a fair range of comparison.<sup>3</sup> The charters in question come from two principal sources. One, the

<sup>2</sup> Durham Cathedral Muniments (hereafter DCM), 1.2.Finc. 1–60, 67: Haswell Ch. 1–108, excluding 66 (Boisfield), 67 (Fallowfield), 81 (not a charter), 88 (Pesspool); 3.6. Spec. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Burnmouth, Cassop, Castle Eden, Coxhoe, Easington, Hardwick, Hawthorn, Monk Hesleden, Horden, Hulam, Hurworth Bryan, Hutton Henry, Kelloe,

Ludworth, North and South Pitlington, Quarrington, Raisby, Shadforth, Sheraton, Sherburn, Shotton, Thornley, Thorpe, Tursdale, Trimdon, Wheatley, Whitwell, Wingate. In addition there are charters from Fallowfield, Pesspool, Boisfield and Flemingfield which were not described as townships.

largest, concerns the estates of Durham Priory and related bodies, including those of the priory's cell at Finchale. The other is a large group of miscellaneous charters, many of which were deposited in the priory by outsiders for safe-keeping in the late Middle Ages. Charters for Haswell come from both sources. About 62 from the priory collection relate to a property that belonged to Finchale Priory. A further 104 relate to an estate assembled in the fourteenth century by the Menville family and transferred to the Claxtons through the marriage of Isabel, daughter and heiress of William Menville, to Sir William Claxton in 1374; these were probably deposited in the Priory on the death of Sir Robert Claxton in 1483.<sup>4</sup> These two groups of charters show that there were three nuclei to Haswell in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. One was Finchale Priory's property of Finchale Grange, near the present Elemore Hall School; this had been a separate township of Little Haswell at the time of its acquisition by Henry du Puiset from Geoffrey of Haswell sometime in the late twelfth century.<sup>5</sup> There were also the two settlements of High and Low Haswell (or Over and Nether Haswell). The charters sometimes treat High and Low Haswell as a single township, sometimes as two.

This patch of the country is in eastern Durham on the magnesian limestone plateau, a region whose surface undulates gently east of the River Wear up to higher land at 130–170 metres (about 420–560 feet) before dropping down again to the sea. There is some surviving ancient woodland, notably around the former Finchale Grange, and in deep gullies (Hawthorn Dene, Castle Eden Dene) that carry burns eastward into the North Sea. The rarity of references to woods in the medieval charters nevertheless suggests that the land was already mostly open and bleak. Though the loams and boulder clays that overlie the limestone are capable of supporting arable farming, local place-names show that within historical times there has been extensive moorland in the region on patches of thin soils. As late as the seventeenth century there were extensive areas of moorland in the area; these have been reconstructed with a high degree of probability in Figure 1.<sup>6</sup> In the early twelfth century the extent of moorland was even greater.

A number of township names have Old English or Scandinavian personal-name elements: Coxhoe, Easington, Garmondsway (though the personal name here was evidently attached to a road rather than to a settlement), Pittington, Raisby, and Sheraton. Of these, Raisby is late, having been assigned only in the twelfth century.<sup>7</sup> Most township names, however, recall natural features with no personal or residential association. Some evoke the earlier vegetation of the region: for instance, Haswell and Hesleden are 'hazel spring' and 'hazel valley', Thornley is 'thorn clearing', Hawthorn is 'hawthorn'.<sup>8</sup> Some suggest wildness; Cassop seems to be 'wild cat valley', and Wingate is 'wind gate'.<sup>9</sup> Other names are taken from springs and streams, or other water features: Eden, Sherburn, Whitwell, Shadforth. Ludworth could be 'Luda's enclosure', but it may mean 'enclosure on the loud stream'.<sup>10</sup> These names suggest some of the characteristics

<sup>4</sup> Brian A. Barker, 'The Claxtons: a north-eastern gentry family in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Teesside, 2003), pp. 10–11, 49–50.

<sup>5</sup> M. G. Snape (ed.), *English episcopal acts*, 25, *Durham, 1153–95* (2002), no. 92, p. 82; id., *English episcopal acts*, 26, *Durham, 1196–1237* (2002), no. 211, pp. 214–5; G. V. Scammell, *Hugh de Puiset, bishop of Durham* (1956), pp. 221–3.

<sup>6</sup> I am indebted to Dr. Helen Dunsford for this map and the research behind it.

<sup>7</sup> Victor Watts, *A dictionary of County Durham place-names* (English Place-Name Soc., Popular ser. 3, 2002), pp. 31, 37, 48, 95, 101, 111.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 55–6, 79, 124.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 24, 140.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 38, 74, 110, 111, 138.

of the region during the Anglo-Saxon period. There is little trace of earlier settlement in prehistoric or Roman times.

Though Durham and Sunderland were the nearest towns, some settlements within the region had central-place characteristics. There were five parochial centres, Easington, South Pittington, Monk Hesleden, Kelloe and Castle Eden. None of these had any commercial significance, and even the largest of them was of modest size. Four of them, besides having parish churches, were significant for the operations of large estates, and to that extent were centres of secular as well as ecclesiastical authority. Easington, an episcopal manor, gave its name to one of the four wards of the Palatinate. Pittington and Monk Hesleden were similarly the property of St Cuthbert, though they had both been allocated to the maintenance of the monks when the estates of St. Cuthbert were divided, and were the chief properties of Durham Priory in the region. Pittington had a large territory, and there were already two Pittingtons, North and South, by the late twelfth century.<sup>11</sup> The lordship of Kelloe was fragmented at an early date; it too had once been church land, but had been granted away before 1183. The bishop retained demesne land at Quarrington that acted as the headquarters of an estate called Quarringtonshire of which there were still relics in the 1180s.<sup>12</sup> It is likely that the church at Kelloe was originally associated with the bishop's demesne at Quarrington as an element in the shire complex. Castle Eden was a property of the Bruce family from the early twelfth century, and seems to have become a separate parish only about that time, perhaps following the grant of the chapel there by Robert Brus to the Priory sometime between 1143 and 1152.<sup>13</sup>

Boldon Book records 36 tenants in Easington and Thorpe together, 22 in Shotton, 54 in the bishop's townships of North Sherburn, Cassop and Shadforth, 19 in South Sherburn and apparently 12 in Tursdale. For what it is worth that implies an average of 18 households in each of these townships.<sup>14</sup> In the early 1380s an episcopal estate survey records 38 tenants for Easington, 18 for Shadforth and 10 for Cassop, suggesting numbers not very greatly different from two centuries before.<sup>15</sup> A similar numerical range was characteristic of the fifteenth century. Hutton Henry had 24 messuages in 1439.<sup>16</sup> Coxhoe had 14 messuages and 20 cottages in 1432.<sup>17</sup> Half the manor of Sheraton had four messuages in 1429.<sup>18</sup> There were seven messuages and seven cottages in the manor of Great Haswell, and three messuages in the manor of Hulam in 1421.<sup>19</sup> With numbers like these, especially since the figures for the 1180s and 1380s are biased towards larger settlements, it is unlikely that these 30 townships had more than 2,500 inhabitants between them, except perhaps in the thirteenth century when that figure may have been exceeded. That represents a population density of only 36 per square mile, at a time when most of Essex and East Anglia had five to ten times as many. In the period of declining population during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, some of these places were deserted. Horden had

<sup>11</sup> H. S. Offler (ed.), *Durham episcopal charters, 1071–1152* (Surtees Soc., 179, 1968), nos. 3, 3a, 4, pp. 6–25, 26–33. See the editor's comment, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> William Greenwell (ed.), *Boldon Buke* (Surtees Soc., 25, 1852), pp. 9–10.

<sup>13</sup> DCM, 3.8. Spec. 9; Robert Surtees, *The history and antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham* (4 vols, Durham, 1816–40), I, p. 40.

<sup>14</sup> Greenwell (ed.), *Boldon Buke*, pp. 9–11.

<sup>15</sup> William Greenwell (ed.), *Bishop Hatfield's survey* (Surtees Soc., 32, 1857), pp. 127–32, 146–7, 150–1.

<sup>16</sup> PRO, Durh 3/2, fo. 296r.

<sup>17</sup> PRO, Durh 3/2, fo. 269v.

<sup>18</sup> PRO, Durh 3/2, fo. 246r.

<sup>19</sup> PRO, Durh 3/2, fo. 260v, 262r.

eight wasted messuages and eight derelict cottages in 1421, when it was already described as 'a wasted village' (*villa vastata*).<sup>20</sup> Even Coxhoe had gone by 1818, when Surtees's first volume reports that 'there is no village'. He also reports this of Tursdale.<sup>21</sup>

Townships had a number of functions. As elsewhere in northern England and Scotland they were often units of lordship, in which case they were the territorial equivalent of manors in southern England.<sup>22</sup> They were units for the collection of tithe.<sup>23</sup> Some were chapelries; at Haswell, for example, there was a chapel between High and Low Haswell whose ruins are marked on the Ordnance Survey map, and the tithes were owed to Finchale Priory.<sup>24</sup> It would be a fair guess that insofar as there was any communal element in agricultural practices the township was a significant unit.<sup>25</sup> In most cases township status was assumed to imply definite bounds, as elsewhere in northern England.<sup>26</sup> These bounds sometimes ran across moorland, sometimes round the edge of township arable. When the bounds of the moor between the townships of Garmondsway and Fishburn were perambulated in 1235, they were defined as running from the highroad between Durham and Sedgfield by 'Stinckandeleche' towards the east to the ploughland once belonging to Ralph Fat, along the diked stream to the boundary of 'Kichinbotisdic' towards the east and thence by the diked boundary of the 'Cotesflat' to 'Keluelausti' between Trimdon field and Fishburn moor, and by 'Kelvelausti' to 'Mustergate', and then by 'Mustergate' to the boundary of Thomas de Yobiun's 'Coteflat' towards the west, and then by the dike between Fishburn field and the moor again to the highroad.<sup>27</sup> Most of the boundary, this seems to say, was defined by dikes, even where there was a stream. The existence of such boundaries, whether or not they all had ditches, can be documented from the earliest charters. They are demonstrable for Tursdale on the fifteenth-century map of Tursdale Beck, which includes the legends (in Latin) 'Here begins the territory of Tursdale on the south side', and 'The hostillar's meadow partly in the territory of Tursdale and partly in the territory of Hett'.<sup>28</sup> Charters usually locate property by reference to the territory of the township in which it was situated.

## I

How was the arable of these small townships organised? Little is known of the cropping patterns of the region. At Pittington in the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the areas under

<sup>20</sup> PRO, Durh 3/2 fo. 260v; Surtees, *History and antiquities*, I, p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> Surtees, *History and antiquities*, I, pp. 66, 76.

<sup>22</sup> Winchester, *Landscape and society*, p. 29.

<sup>23</sup> Ben Dodds, 'Tithe and agrarian output between the Tyne and the Tees, 1350–1450' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Durham, 2002), pp. 71–2, 139–40.

<sup>24</sup> DCM, 1.2. Finc. 4\*, 5, 5\*, 22; Haswell Ch. 10, 50, 65A, 65B.

<sup>25</sup> Lomas, *County of conflict*, p. 76; D. J. H. Michelmores, 'Township and tenure', in Faull and Moorhouse (eds), *West Yorkshire*, II, p. 236.

<sup>26</sup> S. A. Moorhouse, 'Boundaries', in Faull and Moorhouse (eds), *West Yorkshire*, II, pp. 268–72, 281–3; Winchester, *Landscape and society*, pp. 27–8. There is a photograph of a thirteenth-century moorland boundary in Angus J. L. Winchester, *The harvest of the hills: rural life in northern England and the Scottish borders, 1400–1700* (2000), p. 29.

<sup>27</sup> DCM, Sherburn House Deeds 3/6.

<sup>28</sup> M. G. Snape and B. K. Roberts, 'Tursdale Beck, County Durham, circa 1430 x circa 1442', in R. A. Skelton and P. D. A. Harvey (eds), *Local maps and plans from medieval England* (1986), p. 173.

TABLE 1. Composition of grain harvests at Pittington, 1377 and 1449

|                       | 1377<br>% | 1449<br>% |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Wheat                 | 31.7      | 20.2      |
| Barley                | 18.5      | 48.2      |
| Peas, beans and vetch | 8.4       | 4.2       |
| Oats                  | 41.4      | 25.6      |

Source: Ben Dodds, 'Tithe and agrarian output between the Tyne and the Tees, 1350–1450' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Durham, 2002), p. 145.

wheat and barley were about equal to the area under oats and legumes (Table 1), which would be compatible with a simple three-course rotation of crops if the barley was winter-sown. It is unlikely, though, that this was normally resolved into a three-field system of the classic Midland type. On Gray's well-known map defining the boundary of the two-field and three-field systems, this region is almost its northernmost tip, though extensive wastelands made its agriculture very different from that of the Midlands.<sup>29</sup> An approach to the Midland pattern is exemplified at Castle Eden. A fifteenth-century terrier of Thomas Claxton's property, recording 109¼ arable acres, shows the land entirely divided between an east field, a south field and a west field.<sup>30</sup> The fields were about equal in size – 39 acres in the east field, 38¾ acres in the west field and 31½ in the south field – which suggests that they were cropping and pasturing units. These fields were quite lightly subdivided. The demesne was made up of 59 separate parcels of which only eight were as small as a rood and 31 – that is over half – were of an acre or more. Some of Claxton's holdings were whole named units, presumably the equivalent of furlongs. In the east field, for example, he had 8 acres called 'Hallowflat', 3 acres called 'Arcars', 5 acres called 'Westfullwell', 3 acres called 'Estfullwell' and 1 acre called 'Adamdaure'. It is not possible to take this property back in time to see how it had come into being, but the field system itself was at least several centuries old, its existence being implied in two late twelfth-century charters. One of these, indicating an earlier two-field system, concedes a toft in Castle Eden with 24½ acres, being 12½ acres in the eastern part of Eden and 12 acres in the western part, together with two named meadows and common pasture in Eden.<sup>31</sup> The other is a difficult charter by which William of Thorpe gave land in Castle Eden to make up an estate he had promised Durham Priory. Besides 2 tofts, 2 turbaries and 6 acres of land he granted them 'the edge (*costura*) between the east and Blacrikesflat as far as the sike (*sihc*), and another edge at the south as far as the stream, and a third edge at the west as far as the sike'.<sup>32</sup> This seems to be a grant of land on the margin of each of the three fields, east, south and west, at the point where they are bounded by ditch or stream. Castle Eden is the only township in the region where the field-name element 'furlong' occurs. In the east field Claxton had two separate pieces on 'Langforthlang' or 'Langforlang', one of 4 acres and one of 3 roods, and he had

<sup>29</sup> Howard Levi Gray, *English field systems* (1915), frontispiece.

<sup>30</sup> DCM, 3.8. Spec. 30.

<sup>31</sup> DCM, 3.8. Spec. 11.

<sup>32</sup> DCM, 3.8. Spec. 7.

three separate roods on 'Waterforlang'. The system was perhaps imposed from above in the twelfth century, and perhaps by a member of the Brus family. The only other township that has left a clear trace of such a system in medieval records is Tursdale. In 1359 Thomas Surtays attested that a croft that William of 'Elmeden' claimed in severalty in Tursdale used to be fallowed every third year with the west field, when the fallow was grazed by the prior and other free tenants of Tursdale. This supplies the evidence, missing from the Castle Eden information, that free tenants at least had common grazing on the fallow field.<sup>33</sup> There may also have been a regular field system in part of Pitlington, where there is a mention of 'Estfeld' in the manorial account for 1412/13.<sup>34</sup> The sparseness of such references to regular field systems in this part of Durham during the Middle Ages implies that, as often in north-eastern England, the furlong was generally the basic unit rather than the field.<sup>35</sup>

To examine whether the light degree of subdivision of the fields was an old feature of the system or the result of recent engrossment, it is necessary to examine townships where there was no regular field system but where there is earlier evidence of the composition of holdings. The best starting point for this is in Ludworth. The priory records contain a terrier made in May 1419 of two properties in Ludworth, one called the Commonar's land and the other called the Prior's land.<sup>36</sup> The commoner was one of the priory obedientiaries. From about the same time, perhaps 1406, we have a legal statement about these properties that makes it possible to track them back about two hundred years. The priory acquired the Commonar's land in the earlier thirteenth century, perhaps about 1240, though an earlier charter takes its history back to before 1209. Sometime c. 1200 this property was put together by Walter of Ludworth, lord of Ludworth, who combined a bovat from his demesne and a bovat previously occupied by a tenant called Ketil.<sup>37</sup> The combined acreage was 32 (presumably customary) acres. The other property, the Prior's land, is first known from a charter of c. 1240, when Prior Melsanby granted it to Ivo the smith of Ludford for an annual rent. The memorandum of c. 1406 says that this land was of 46 acres.<sup>38</sup> These, then, are lands that had been in the priory's hands since the early thirteenth century; there is no charter evidence of exchanges or augmentations that would imply any intervening restructuring. In both cases the memorandum of c. 1406 says that the lands were interspersed in the field between the lands of the lord of Ludworth and of other free tenants ('iacent in campo in diuersis locis inter terras domini ville et aliorum libere tenendum'). The terrier of 1419 does not record acreages but measures the land in rigs. Like the demesne at Castle Eden these properties are subdivided, but rather lightly so. The Commonar's land of 32 acres lay in 30 pieces varying in size between a single rood up to six rigs lying together. There were 108 rigs all told, so the average rig was about 0.3 of an acre. On this reckoning 20 out of the 30 pieces of Commonar's land were over an acre in size. The Prior's land confirms the point well. Here there were 108 rigs, so the rig averaged only about 0.25 of an acre, but the land was divided into only seventeen pieces. The largest three, of 28, 22 and 22 rigs, were probably all of over 5 acres in a single piece. This is very reminiscent of the demesne

<sup>33</sup> DCM, 1.14. Spec. 21.

<sup>34</sup> I owe this information to Dr. Benjamin Dodds.

<sup>35</sup> R. A. Butlin, 'Field systems of Northumberland and Durham', in A. R. H. Baker and R. A. Butlin (eds), *Studies*

*of Field Systems in the British Isles* (1973), pp. 141–4.

<sup>36</sup> DCM, 2.8. Spec. 18.

<sup>37</sup> DCM, 2.8. Spec. 3.

<sup>38</sup> DCM, 2.8. Spec. 1.

TABLE 2. Grant of 50 acres from his land of 'Duna' by Alan of Pittington to Durham Priory (early thirteenth century)

|                                                          |                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 27 acres                                                 | at Aldetunestede                  |
| 8½ acres                                                 | at Langethorn and Moerslawe forde |
| 14 acres                                                 | at Bromflat and Culverflat        |
| ½ acre                                                   | at Stanne in the east of Bromflat |
| 50 acres                                                 |                                   |
| <i>Source:</i> Durham Cathedral Muniments, 1.8. Spec. 3. |                                   |

TABLE 3. Grant of a half carucate from his demesne in Hawthorn by Simon of Hawthorn to Durham Priory (early thirteenth century)

|                                                           |                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6 acres                                                   | between the meadow of Holpethe and the Dene                                                                             |
| 2 acres                                                   | on the western side of the same meadow of Holepeth'                                                                     |
| 8 acres                                                   | by the white thorn towards the west                                                                                     |
| 4 acres                                                   | above the tofts running from south to north beside the main road                                                        |
| 4 acres                                                   | above the tofts running north by land of Simon son of Ralph                                                             |
| 8 acres                                                   | on the south side on Leyflat'                                                                                           |
| 4 acres                                                   | on Kydon' towards the north                                                                                             |
| 4 acres                                                   | on Seflat next land of Guy de Gransard towards the south                                                                |
| 8 acres                                                   | on Crocsflat beside the road going from Thardene to the sea<br>all the land below Harehouh<br>all my meadow of Holpeth' |
| 48 acres                                                  |                                                                                                                         |
| <i>Source:</i> Durham Cathedral Muniments, 2.8. Spec. 45. |                                                                                                                         |

at Castle Eden, and suggests that light subdivision was an old feature of demesne lands, going back to at least 1200, rather than a new feature of the fifteenth century.

The same point can be demonstrated from some of the earlier charters of the collection. One example is the early thirteenth-century grant by which Alan of Pittington gave 50 acres to the Durham Priory from his land of 'Duna' (Table 2).<sup>39</sup> Another is the grant from the same period of half a ploughland from Simon of Hawthorn's demesne in Hawthorn (Table 3).<sup>40</sup> These records attest a system in which the lands were located by reference to furlongs, often called flats, without any high organization into fields. They also suggest that a relatively light degree of subdivision was a general characteristic of the region.

It is unlikely that a distribution of land of this erratic kind should derive from any primeval principle of co-aration or land sharing, but among the lands described in these charters it is not uncommon to find systematic relations between neighbouring field units. For example, early in the fourteenth century Reginald of Witton drew up a charter conveying a bovat of

<sup>39</sup> DCM, 1.8. Spec. 3.

<sup>40</sup> DCM, 2.8. Spec. 45.

TABLE 4. Grant of 8 acres in Great Haswell by William Burdon of Haswell and his wife Ada to Matilda of Seaton, widow of John of Hardwick (1323)

|                |                                |                                                              |
|----------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3½ acres       | in Harmer                      | next land of Margaret widow of Ralph of Greatham on the east |
| ½ acre         | in Harmer                      | next land of William chaplain on the east                    |
| 1 acre 3 roods | in a place called the Feringes | next the moor of Shadforth                                   |
| ½ acre         | in Laytholf                    | next land of the said Margaret on the west                   |
| 1 rood         | between the streets            | next land of the said Margaret on the east                   |
| 3 roods        | at the Coves                   | next land of the said Margaret on the west                   |
| 1 rood         | at Refowe                      | next land of the said Margaret on the east                   |
| 1 rood         | at Spitellandes                | next the road (iuxta stratam)                                |
| 1 rood         | at Smalburn                    | next land of the said Margaret on the north                  |
| 8 acres        |                                |                                                              |

Source: Durham Cathedral Muniments, Haswell Ch. 39.

TABLE 5. Grant of toft and 6 acres in Great Haswell by William Burdon of Haswell and his wife Ada to Isolda daughter of Richard of Herrington (1320 x 1330)

|          |                                |                                                                                                  |
|----------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Toft     |                                | between a toft of Margaret widow of Ralph of Greatham and a toft formerly of William of Scotland |
| 4½ acres | in a place called Heshhawehill | next land of the said Margaret                                                                   |
| 1½ acres | on the Firing(es)              | next land of the said Margaret                                                                   |
| 6 acres  |                                |                                                                                                  |

Source: Durham Cathedral Muniments, Haswell Ch. 43

land in the township and territory of Over Haswell. It is described as lying in the field in scattered parcels ('in campo per partes diuisim') between land of Thomas Burdon on one side and land of Geoffrey of Dunstan on the other.<sup>41</sup> Two grants of land by William Burdon of Haswell and his wife in the 1320s (Tables 4 and 5) show a similar recurrent relationship between their land and that of the widow of Ralph of Greatham.<sup>42</sup> If this is not the outcome of some primitive practice of field-planning it needs some other explanation, and in fact these charters contain abundant evidence to demonstrate an alternative source of such subdivision.

Sometime between 1188 and 1212 John of Hulam granted to the monks of Durham 12 acres with a toft in Hulam and with rights of common pasture for the monks and their men alongside his own beasts and those of his men. In effect he had created a new bovate on which the monks could settle a tenant. The way he had done this is clearly stated in the charter. The land is granted 'in my 12 *culture* in that township in which I have assigned the monk's 12 acres, that is to say one acre nearest towards the sun ('propinquier adversus solem') in each *cultura*.<sup>43</sup> The translation of *cultura* is problematic, but John would probably have said 'flat'. This is an

<sup>41</sup> DCM, Haswell Ch. 106.

<sup>42</sup> DCM, Haswell Ch. 39, 43.

<sup>43</sup> DCM, 3.7. Spec. 6.

important charter because it apparently shows an early stage of subdivision in a terrain of compact holdings. The flats are implied to belong to John of Hulam – presumably blocks of demesne land like those encountered on the demesne at Castle Eden. But rather than give the Durham monks a block, the donor systematically subdivided each of 12 flats to give them the southern or eastern acre in each. That presumably meant assigning to the monks three or four rigs from the end of each of the 12 flats. This example provides the key to understanding a grant by Alan of Hutton, son of William of Hutton, to Nigel of Rounton, for his homage and service, of half his demesne land in the field of Hutton. He describes this as 23 acres 3 roods of cultivated land lying nearest the sun in

Thinnethornes, Stanilawe, Ticclinwelle', Dedeside, Fulewelle, Hallingwelle ac Alizkilne ac Gilbert hus hirning, Grenebanc, Hodic, Toddelande up an dun, Crokedlandesende, Thene Thornesker attentherende, Stokeside, Morheved, Cutethoren, Pittelcroft, Trebrigge west fra the lawe, the but bi sut Hodic, Langgerigges bi est the ker bi the segges, Mulekenforde, Langelandes, Sutherkattelawe attendes up bi the strete dun to the forde ac Herilawe.

Together with this he granted half his meadows, peat diggings, moors, pastures and other demesne lands, nearer the sun, and a toft that Richard son of Swayn held in Hutton.<sup>44</sup> In this case it is less open to surmise that the parcels of the donor's demesne were complete flats, but the principle of division is the same. The halving of the demesne had divided not one piece of arable land but at least 24. The operation of such a principle could reduce compact lands to shreds within a few generations. Several historians have examined the justification for such fragmentation; it recognized the variable quality of land and the need to ensure that partitions of land were conducted fairly.<sup>45</sup>

The previous examples illustrate two of the circumstances in which free land was alienated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the donation of land to pious foundations and the rewarding of dependants, though it is questionable just what the significance of Nigel of Rounton's 'homage and service' might be. Family settlements were a further occasion for the splitting of lands, and there are cases to illustrate this too. In 1321 William son of Hugh Burdon granted to his son in law, Peter Burdeus of 'Harebaru', on the occasion of the marriage, all lands and tenements that he had in the township and territory of Great Haswell except for one bovate. We have a complementary charter by which less than a fortnight later he granted that bovate to William the chaplain of Haswell. Both charters specify where the bovate in question lay, and it is here apparent that the bovate had been newly created by the process we have already observed. William divided ten of his lands rather than maintain such integrity as his property had (Table 6).<sup>46</sup> This type of family subdivision is relevant to charters where the granter's land is consistently next to that of some family member. We do not know that that

<sup>44</sup> DCM, Misc. Ch. 6284.

<sup>45</sup> R. A. Dodgshon, 'The landholding foundations of the open-field system', *Past and Present* 67 (1975), pp. 14–22; id., 'Towards an understanding and definition of runrig: the evidence for Roxburghshire and Berwickshire', *Trans. Institute of British Geographers* 64 (1975), pp. 28–9. Later discussion has mostly originated

from the debate inaugurated by D. N. McCloskey, 'English open fields as behaviour towards risk', in P. Uselding (ed.), *Research in economic history* 1 (1976), pp. 124–70, and S. Fenoaltea, 'Risk, transaction costs and the organisation of medieval agriculture', *Explorations in Economic History* 13 (1976), pp. 129–51.

<sup>46</sup> DCM, Haswell Ch. 36, 37.

TABLE 6. A bovate granted by William son of Hugh Burdon of Haswell to William chaplain of Haswell in the vill and territory of Great Haswell (1321)

|                   |                   |                |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1 acre            | in the Croft      | nearer the sun |
| 1½ acres          | in Owlonlandes    | nearer the sun |
| 3 roods           | at the Grenlawe   | nearer the sun |
| 1 acre            | at Refhowe        | nearer the sun |
| 1 acre            | at Shitirlawe     | nearer the sun |
| 1 acre            | at Midrigg(es)    | nearer the sun |
| 1 rood            | at Axlaulepes     | nearer the sun |
| 1 acre            | at Refhowetes     | next meadow    |
| 1 acre and ½ rood | at Sywyneacreside | nearer the sun |
| 1½ roods          | at the Haluerodes |                |
| 9 acres           |                   |                |

Source: Durham Cathedral Muniments, Haswell Ch. 37; cf. also Haswell Ch. 36, which excepts this land from the grant of William's other lands.

is the case in the charters of William and Ada Burdon discussed earlier, though it would not be surprising to find that Margaret of Greatham was the sister of Ada Burdon. But in a parallel case from the early fourteenth century the situation is sufficiently clear. William Gery with the consent of his wife Alice, granted away all the land that Alice had inherited from her mother Alice in the townships and fields of Upper and Lower Haswell, and the land is described as lying between land of Alice's sister Emma and land of Richard son of Emma of the Hall.<sup>47</sup> The relationship between Richard and the two sisters is unknown. The origins of subdivision in this part of Durham are mostly earlier than our documentation. However, the evidence is quite enough to show that the breaking up of arable lands needed no principle other than the division of properties by the splitting of individual flats, and that even compact demesnes were liable to become subdivided in the course of time.

There were seemingly methods of splitting other than dividing lands nearer and farther from the sun; the grant to Matilda of Seaton, discussed earlier, shows that Margaret of Greatham's land was sometimes east and sometimes west of the land being granted. However, some of these examples clearly relate to the practice of sun-division, or *solskifte*. When in 1941 Homans discussed the relevance of the concept to English villages, he had in mind a sun-division principle involving 'a complete village plan', in which tenants' strips followed the same sequence in each furlong. This systematic allocation of strips implies some past moment of collective, or authoritarian, planning whose principles were assiduously respected by successive generations; otherwise there would have been nothing left of the plan by the thirteenth century. Homans duly interprets irregularities in the distribution of plots as evidence of decay.<sup>48</sup> This understanding of sun-division has since been criticized, notably Göransson. This method of defining divisions between the land of different occupiers, which was widespread in northern Britain,

<sup>47</sup> DCM, 1.2. Finc. 13\*.

*thirteenth century* (1941), pp. 94–100.

<sup>48</sup> George Caspar Homans, *English villagers of the*

was not a simple legacy of Scandinavian settlement, as was once supposed.<sup>49</sup> The evidence we have examined contains no suggestion of primeval subdivision, but rather that the primitive lay-out of the land was in blocks. Sun-division here was rather an ad hoc device to subdivide holdings parcel by parcel. A Scottish memorandum of 1428 by Patrick of Dunbar, lord of Biel, records how he supervised the partition of the West Mains at Haddington (Berwickshire) between the abbot of Melrose and Walter of Hallyburton. A local assize judged that the two ploughlands there could be divided most fairly 'rundale by four rigs and four to either part'. So advised, 'the said abbot and the said lord of Hallyburton took two cables ('kabillis') and brought me them and I cast them the t'one to the sun and the t'other to the shadow, and thus it was departed'. This procedure is a form of taking lots, presumably depending on the arbitrator's not knowing whose cable was whose.<sup>50</sup>

Subdivided furlongs were in this way created by sun-division in the course of time, rather than having been laid out all at once. As a principle of dividing property it sometimes goes unsaid. Sometime before 1316 Richard son of Emma of the Hall, of Lower Haswell, granted to Robert Page, of Upper Haswell, a quarter of the land with tofts and crofts which Walter Tussard, his grandfather, once held in the townships and territories of Upper and Lower Haswell.<sup>51</sup> This grant is superficially underspecified, but it needs only the addition of the words 'nearer the sun' to define the transfer precisely. Sun-division was a sufficiently convenient device to be used independently of long cultural inheritance, though in fact it seems to be particularly common in northern England and eastern Scotland.<sup>52</sup> Many of the examples historians have used as evidence for primeval sun-division would equally well serve as evidence for the on-going procedures we have observed.<sup>53</sup> On the assumption that an ancient distribution of strips would be unlikely to survive without irregularities, the more regular the pattern, the more likely it is to represent some recent subdivision than some ancient master plan. The examples of Worting and Tayllard manors in Kibworth Harcourt, as described by Hilton, are readily intelligible as an instance of late sun-division, given that the procedure had here been used to divide two pre-existing demesnes; Hilton was right to be sceptical of the relevance of sun-division in Homans' sense.<sup>54</sup> Sun-division as a means of sharing property was not designed to create regular field layouts, and so it is not necessary to explain irregularities as evidence of a degraded system.<sup>55</sup>

As long as landlords imposed restrictions on the break-up of customary holdings, tenants were presumably prevented from subdividing land in this way, but we have few details about how the customary bovates of Durham were structured at this time. In later sources when ancient holdings were still common, northern husbandlands were commonly made up of

<sup>49</sup> M. L. Faull, 'The post-Roman period', in Faull and Moorhouse (eds), *West Yorkshire*, I, pp. 197–8; S. Göransson, 'Regular open-field pattern in England and Scandinavian solskifte', *Geografisker Annaler* 43B (1961), pp. 80–101.

<sup>50</sup> Cosmo Innes (ed.), *Liber Sancte Marie de Melros* (2 vols, Bannatyne Club 56, 1837), II, pp. 519–21 (spelling modernized).

<sup>51</sup> DCM, 1.2. Finc. 7.

<sup>52</sup> Dodgshon, 'Landholding foundations', pp. 5–6; idem, 'Scandinavian "solskifte" and the sunwise division

of land in eastern Scotland', *Scottish Stud.*, 19 (1975), pp. 3–5; id., *The origin of British field systems: an interpretation* (1980), pp. 32–3.

<sup>53</sup> E.g. J. A. Sheppard, 'Field systems of Yorkshire', in Baker and Butlin (eds), *Studies in field systems*, p. 175.

<sup>54</sup> R. H. Hilton, 'Kibworth Harcourt – a Merton College manor in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries', in id., *Class conflict and the crisis of feudalism: essays in medieval history* (1985), p. 10.

<sup>55</sup> cf. Dodgshon, *Origin of British field systems*, p. 52.

scattered and interspersed strips in open fields.<sup>56</sup> If these had originally been allocated by the sun-division, in the interests of equality, it is possible that landlord's conservatism had preserved some ancient and regular field divisions of a *solskifte* form. This is unlikely, however, to have been a recognizable feature of the field pattern except in a few larger villages. Husbandmen were few in the predominantly small lordships of the Durham villages we have examined; none are mentioned in the charters of Haswell, and it seems unlikely that they constituted more than a small minority of the rural population.

## II

The arable of the settlements under discussion was subordinate, at least in acreage, to a pastoral economy based in part on common lands. Some of the Haswell charters substantiate the suggestion that township territories contained common pastures. Sometime between 1244 and 1258 William son of Guy of Haswell, seemingly the lord of Haswell, quitclaimed to Finchale Priory two carucates of land in Over and Nether Haswell. He granted the monks and their men of the Haswells common pasture through all the moor of the Haswells, provided that they did not sell or grant it away to others, together with full common towards the north through the whole, from the west of Great Haswell by the brook, beginning at 'Catteholes' and ending in 'Espedene', and from the east likewise towards the north through the whole, from the road from Great Haswell to Fallowfield.<sup>57</sup> This concedes rights over a wide area of the territory of Haswell. Cat Hole, still to be found on the modern Ordnance Survey map, marks a point on the west moors, and the road from Great Haswell to Fallowfield must define land within Haswell's territory to the east.

The Haswell charters also show that there was scope for intercommoning between townships on pastures within their separate territories. In 1314, a deal with the bishop of Durham enabled Thomas du Bois, Lucy of Haswell, William of Silksworth, William of Burdon, and Ralph of Greatham, all landowner in Haswell, to enclose the moors of Haswell and hold them in severalty. This involved giving the bishop 24 acres of moor in Haswell to hold in severalty, and simultaneously renouncing all claims to common rights in the townships of Sherburn and Shadforth. In exchange the bishop renounced all claims of commoning in Haswell both for himself and for the men of Sherburn and Shadforth.<sup>58</sup> In an agreement of 1329 Richard, prior of Finchale, Thomas du Bois, Lucy of Haswell, Margaret widow of Ralph of Greatham, John de Meneville, Lucy daughter of William of Silksworth, John of Kelloe and William Burdon, all owners of land in the fields of Haswell, described themselves as lords of the moor of Great Haswell.<sup>59</sup> They were under pressure to accommodate an outside party who claimed that his common rights had been disregarded in the recent enclosure of the moors. These charters all have the virtue of demonstrating that there could be commoned moors within township territories as well as beyond them.

The rights of freeholders on the extensive moors beyond their township bounds require further research, but there is good evidence that such rights were exercised, subject to some

<sup>56</sup> Butlin, 'Field systems', p. 138.

<sup>57</sup> DCM, 1.2. Finc. 2, 54(a).

<sup>58</sup> DCM, Haswell Ch. 61.

<sup>59</sup> DCM, 1.2. Finc. 17.

measure of seigniorial control. Such intercommoning is to be found on extensive waste throughout England, but it was particularly important for the pastoral economies of the north and the west.<sup>60</sup> A notarial instrument of 1430 established that within living memory the tenants of Shincliffe grazed on Quarrington Moor between Shincliffe and Tursdale.<sup>61</sup> This was at a time when the priory was challenging the claim that Quarrington Moor belonged to Tursdale Manor.<sup>62</sup> The moor between Garmondsway and Fishburn was perambulated in 1235 to define land that should remain for ever common between the townships of Garmondsway and Fishburn; the deed is endorsed 'Perambulation of common pasture between Garmondsway and Fishburn'.<sup>63</sup> Similar intercommoning was practised on Easington Moor. In 1316 the bishop of Durham's granted his servant William de Denum 20 acres of the bishop's waste in Easington Moor, formerly belonging to Robert of Pespool. He granted with it the right to common with the bishop's other men in Easington and Shotton, except on the bishop's own severalties and on improvements wherever he or his successors choose to make them.<sup>64</sup> The saving clause here conveniently confirms what must be suspected from the bishop's grants of wasteland, that lords could in some circumstances restrict intercommoning rights over extra-territorial waste. The bishop was probably the greatest wielder of claims over moorland in the region, and his rights of control over Easington Moor are demonstrated from his recorded grants of land there. The historical origin of this right presumably derives from the bishop's lordship of Easington and its dependencies, including dependent townships, wastes and moors, according to some version of the characteristically northern 'shire' structure. Easington is a plausible centre for such a shire, given its other central-place attributes, and the dependence of other townships upon the lordship there is implied by the details of labour services in *Boldon Book*. It is certain that the bishop did not control all the extensive moorland in the region; Sir William Blaykeston, for example, had 100 acres of pasture and 1,000 acres of moor attached to his manor and township of Coxhoe in 1432.<sup>65</sup> None of the charters for this region specify stints on the use of common pasture either within township territories or beyond, which implies that any restrictions on the use of commons was informal rather than part of the structure of land tenure.

At the time when the bishopric was brought under Norman domination in the late eleventh century much of the moorland of Durham was capable of being cultivated. The most extensive area of potential arable in the moors of these parishes was a stretch of relatively high and exposed land between Haswell and Easington, running roughly parallel to the coast. In the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a string of isolated and compact properties was created along this line, cutting into the moor. The origins of the earliest of them are undocumented. The southernmost within the region, Edder Acres meaning 'Ethelred's cultivated land', was founded before 1184, since it is recorded in *Boldon Book*, though there are no details there concerning its size or character.<sup>66</sup> Another such farm was Fallowfield, subsequently divided between High and Low Fallowfield, carved out of Hawthorn Moor at 120 metres (about 400

<sup>60</sup> Baker and Butlin (eds), *Studies in field systems*, pp. 137, 157, 246, 250, 327, 365; S. A. Moorhouse, 'The rural medieval landscape', in Faull and Moorhouse (eds), *West Yorkshire*, III, pp. 672–3.

<sup>61</sup> DCM, 1.14. Spec. 26.

<sup>62</sup> DCM, 1.14. Spec. 27.

<sup>63</sup> DCM, Sherburn House Deeds 3/6.

<sup>64</sup> DCM, Misc. Ch. 5152.

<sup>65</sup> PRO, Durh 3/2, fo. 269v–270r. See also Dunsford and Harris, 'Colonization', pp. 49–52.

<sup>66</sup> Greenwell (ed.), *Boldon Buke*, p. 9; Watts, *Dictionary*, p. 37.

feet). It first occurs in the records, but with no details concerning its character or origins, in the later twelfth century (1162 x 1189).<sup>67</sup>

To the south of Fallowfield was Pespool, about on the 125-metre contour (about 410 feet). The name means 'long grass pool', 'reed pool', or 'rush pool'. The farm dates from the mid-thirteenth century when Walter Kirkham, bishop of Durham (1249–60) granted his servant John Haldan 156 acres of moor in Easington. The bounds of the property are described as running from 'Coves' to Pespool stream, to Pespool, to 'Houstrete', to 'Houhope', to 'Pesehopeburn' to 'Petekerford', to 'Coveburn', and back to 'Coves'.<sup>68</sup> Cove Holes is marked on modern Ordnance Survey maps. A later account of the property from 1316, when it was leased, records both the capital messuage of the manor of Pespool and 119 acres of land lying within stated bounds, beginning on the west side at the ditch between the manor of Pespool and the field of Haswell, and stretching along this ditch on the west side.<sup>69</sup> The ditch in question was evidently a boundary between Pespool and the lands of the township of Haswell. The whole property, again called a manor, was described in 1431 as having 200 acres of arable and 100 acres of pasture.<sup>70</sup> Its attractiveness declined during the fourteenth century; by about 1383 the annual rent owed to the bishop had diminished to 13s. 4d. from £2 10s. 0d. at some previous point.<sup>71</sup>

A medieval farm called Boisfield lay in or around where Pespool wood is marked on modern maps, at about 140 metres (about 470 feet).<sup>72</sup> It was created, sometime between 1261 and 1273, when Robert Stichill, bishop of Durham, granted his servant (*valetus*) John du Bois a carucate from the bishop's waste on Easington Moor, bounded from 'Blakrig' to 'Blacden', to 'Wytemer', to 'Grimeswellemerse', to 'Hokendenthorn', to 'Lethelowe'.<sup>73</sup> John acquired an adjacent 24 acres of waste on Easington Moor between 'Blakerigg' and 'Howynstret' in about 1283.<sup>74</sup> This was another compact farm, explicitly created outside existing township territories, on the bishop's waste. A later charter of 1316 confirms that it had rights of common pasture, presumably on Easington Moor, though it does not specify the extent of this right.<sup>75</sup> Presumably the moor was large enough not to need stinting. Boisfield was adjacent to Pespool, and was later integrated with it to make a single farm; they were already in the same hands by about 1383.<sup>76</sup> In 1421 this property was described simply as '140 acres of land called Boysfeld', and again in 1431 as having 160 acres of land 'with appurtenances'.<sup>77</sup>

The latest example of a farm created from the waste is from nearby at Flemingfield Farm at 150 metres (about 490 feet). In 1283 Robert of Holy Island, bishop of Durham, granted to John the Fleming of Newcastle and his wife Isabel a portion of the bishop's moor of Shotton and Easington with stated bounds, that is from the road from Castle Eden to Haswell across 'Goreburne', then from that road northwards up to the bounds of Ludworth, as enclosed by a ditch, then down along the bounds of Ludworth through the middle of 'Wydeker' southward

<sup>67</sup> DCM, Haswell Ch. 1.

<sup>68</sup> DCM, Misc. Ch. 5150. The property was conveyed back to Roger de Herteburn in 1261: Misc. Ch. 5153; Watts, *Dictionary*, p. 94.

<sup>69</sup> DCM, Misc. Ch. 6159.

<sup>70</sup> PRO, Durh 3/2, fo. 261r.

<sup>71</sup> Greenwell (ed.), *Bishop Hatfield's survey*, p. 127.

<sup>72</sup> I owe information about the location of Boisfield to

Dr Simon Harris.

<sup>73</sup> DCM, Misc. Ch. 6153; 6152 is a copy and 6151 and 6154 are copies of an *inspeximus* of 1273.

<sup>74</sup> DCM, Misc. Ch. 6151.

<sup>75</sup> DCM, Misc. Ch. 6155.

<sup>76</sup> Greenwell (ed.), *Bishop Hatfield's survey*, p. 127; Surtees, *History and antiquities*, I, p. 19.

<sup>77</sup> PRO, Durh 3/2, fos. 205v–206r, 261v; Durh 3/165/3.

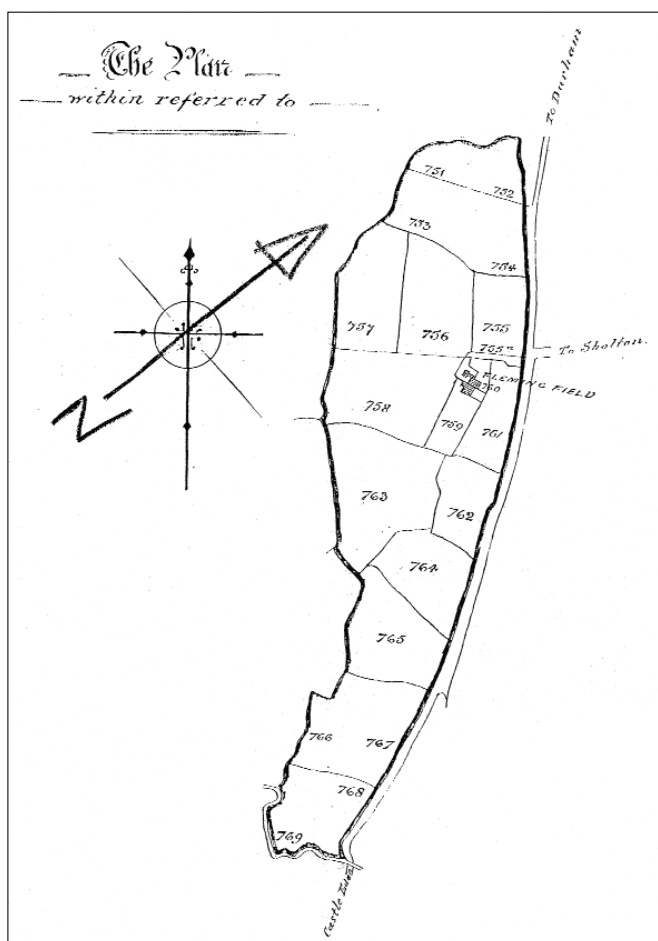


FIGURE 2. Bounds of Flemingfield as drawn on a title deed of 1894. Duham Cathedral Muniments, CC 315/267222.

to 'Goreburn', then down along 'Goreburne' eastward to the road from Castle Eden to Haswell, to hold from the bishop and his successors in severalty all days of the year, with common pasture in the moors of Shotton and Easington.<sup>78</sup> The bounds of the farm are clearly defined on a title deed of 1894 (Figure 2),<sup>79</sup> and can easily be picked out on modern 2½ inch Ordnance Survey maps. The road from Castle Eden to Haswell is the B1280, and the bounds of Ludworth are now the boundary between the modern civil and ecclesiastical parishes of Haswell and Shotton. Gore Burn retains the same name it had in 1283. Flemingfield, like Pespool, was exceptionally vulnerable to falling land values, and in c. 1383 its rent was reported to have declined from nearly £4 to 13s. 4d.<sup>80</sup>

Although the farms on Easington Moor constitute the largest examples of late settlement, Quarrington Moor and its environs was another such territory. In the late twelfth century Bishop Hugh du Puiset gave 50 acres of land in the bishop's moor of Quarrington to Robert son of Stephen.<sup>81</sup> Raisby must also have been settled for the first time in the later twelfth

<sup>78</sup> Known from DCM, Misc. Ch. 6158, 7083

<sup>79</sup> DCM, CC 315/267222.

<sup>80</sup> Greenwell (ed.), *Bishop Hatfield's survey*, p. 127. Cf. Durh 3/2, fo. 264v.

century. It was granted to Sherburn Hospital probably in 1183 by Race Engaine, who was described later in the 1180s as the first person to cultivate and inhabit the site; its name – ‘Raceby’ in its earliest form – is derived from this man’s name.<sup>82</sup> In 1293 Bishop Anthony Bek gave Master Richard of Coxhoe, clerk, 80 acres of land by Tursdale field bounded by ‘Wydehopeburn’ on the north and ‘Fenneburn’ on the south. Though the land was said to be already enclosed by ditches,<sup>83</sup> a confirmation of the grant of 1298 gave Richard licence to enclose the land as his severalty.<sup>84</sup> In 1300, Bek gave 34 acres from the waste in Quarrington Moor to Walter of Rothbury. This land is described as enclosed by ditches and stretching from Croxdale field on the west side to the highway from Tursdale to Durham on the east side, and from Shincliffe Moor on the north side to Tursdale Moor at ‘Brademerbecke’ on the south side.<sup>85</sup> These are all smaller intakes than those recorded on Easington Moor, but exemplify the same practice, and similarly resulted in the creation of compact farms.<sup>86</sup> Pespool, Boisfield and Flemingfield, the new farms for which we have an exact provenance, describe these properties as on the moor rather than in the territory of a township, though abutting onto township lands. Pespool and Boisfield abutted on to the field of Haswell, from which they are separated by ditches, and Flemingfield abutted onto Ludworth, from which it was similarly separated by a ditch – further examples of the township boundaries discussed earlier.

It is impossible to judge from the bare terminology of the charters just how these new farming ventures were initiated. The charters that created Pespool and Boisfield were both explicitly granted by a bishop to his servants. John Haldan, who created Pespool Farm, served as sheriff under Walter de Kirkham (1249–60).<sup>87</sup> Such grants imply that patronage was involved to some extent, though the impetus behind these investments is likely to have come from the beneficiaries themselves. So much colonization of wasteland, especially over inhospitable terrain like Easington Moor, implies a rising demand for land, still capable of being satisfied in the early fourteenth century. The subdivision of peasant holdings and enlargement of township fields in many parts of the Palatinate was no doubt in part a response to rising population and land hunger, as elsewhere in the North.<sup>88</sup> The creation of new farms by the bishops’ servants, on the other hand, suggests either a search for a more secure status through landholding as a free tenant of the bishop or awareness of commercial possibilities. The creation of Flemingfield by a

<sup>81</sup> DCM, Sherburn House Deeds 1/4.

<sup>82</sup> Snape (ed.), *English episcopal acts*, 25: *Durham 1153–1195*, no. 145, pp. 121–4; Watts, *Dictionary*, p. 101.

<sup>83</sup> DCM, Misc. Ch. 6414. Misc. Ch. 6415 is a confirmation the following year by the prior of Durham. The fifteenth-century map of Tursdale Beck marks both ‘ffenburn’ and ‘Wydoppe burn’. The former ‘is present today as the small stream crossing the Durham to Stockton road near the northern end of Coxhoe village at Four Mile Bridge (NZ 316365)’, and the latter ‘must be the Bowburn Beck, which rises near Bowburn and flows south-westwards to join the Tursdale Beck to the south-east of Tursdale House (NGR NZ 296368)’: Snape and Roberts, ‘Tursdale Beck’, p. 175.

<sup>84</sup> The original seems to be lost. DCM, Misc. Ch.

Misc. Ch. 7223 is a fragmentary copy on paper. Misc. Ch. 6416, a better text, is the prior’s confirmation charter, also of 1298.

<sup>85</sup> The original charter seems not to have survived, but DCM, 4.13. Spec. 16 is a late copy (? c. 1400) and it is transcribed in 1.14. Spec. 27. It is printed in C. M. Fraser (ed.), *Records of Anthony Bek* (Surtees Soc., 162, 1953), no. 64, pp. 56–7.

<sup>86</sup> DCM, Misc. Ch. 7223.

<sup>87</sup> Haldan is recorded as sheriff in DCM, 1.1. Finc. 6. I owe this reference to Simon Harris.

<sup>88</sup> Richard Lomas, *North-east England in the Middle Ages* (1992), pp. 152–5; Marie Stinson, ‘Assarting and poverty in early-fourteenth-century western Yorkshire’, *Landscape Hist.*, 5 (1983), pp. 53–67.

Newcastle man perhaps represents both motives acting concurrently. Although off the beaten track these moorland farms were all in a position to supply grain and pastoral produce to Durham city, which was by this time a city of several thousand inhabitants. The new farms may, too, have been profiting from England's rising wool exports, which peaked in the early fourteenth century.<sup>89</sup> The creation of farms of this kind from the waste was far from being a localized phenomenon. Similar farms were numerous in north-eastern England,<sup>90</sup> and in the Yorkshire Pennines, sometimes for specialized development in cattle-raising.<sup>91</sup>

The new farms of the age of expansion might seem to represent a more modern ideal of compact units, free from the complexities of open-field agriculture. Yet they, too, were subject to division in the course of land grants and family settlements, and it is striking testimony to the cultural prevalence of the system of subdivision already described that even in this context sun-division might be thought appropriate. Sometime in the early fourteenth century, before 1316, Walter of Haswell divided his lands at Fallowfield between the two sisters, Lucy and Juliana, daughter of Robert of Haswell. They were perhaps Walter's nieces.<sup>92</sup> Indented deeds were made out, one each to Lucy and Juliana, both attested with the same witness list and no doubt drawn up on the same day. Lucy's document gives her 'half a toft nearer the sun in Haswell and half all the arable land, meadow, turbary and moor nearer the sun with their appurtenances in Haswell in a place called Fallowfield'. Juliana's document gives her 'half a toft further from the sun in Haswell and half all the arable land, meadow, turbary and moor further from the sun with their appurtenances in Haswell in a place called Fallowfield'.<sup>93</sup> There was some chance that these halves of the property would come together again, but the splitting of properties between sisters is a very frequent source of permanent fragmentation. By such means, even a farm like Fallowfield had started down the road to subdivision between interspersed holdings. The practical advantages of compact farmland were evidently a less powerful consideration than traditional principles of fairness.

There is a limit to what be achieved with charter evidence. It shows well enough some features of the agrarian structure, but conceals others. In particular there is inadequate material to define how the arable lands of this part of eastern Durham were pastured. The moorland context is presumably relevant to explaining why townships had mostly not adopted a regular two- or three-field system, and the low population of the region would explain why the subdivision of lands had not proceeded further. It would be good to know whether furlongs were managed as separate units of cropping and fallow pasturing, or as elements in more comprehensive systems. But perhaps 'system' was something these townships did not share with the Midlands. Their few inhabitants could have managed their agrarian resources with a degree of informality that would hardly have been tolerated in a large Midland village.

<sup>89</sup> E. M. Carus-Wilson and O. Coleman, *England's export trade, 1275-1547* (1963), p. 122.

<sup>90</sup> Dunsford and Harris, 'Colonization and wasteland', pp. 53-8; R. A. Lomas, 'Crookbank, Beckley and Andrew's House, and the de Laley family', *Durham Archaeological J.*, 13 (1997), pp. 99-102; id., *North-east England*, pp. 155-8.

<sup>91</sup> Moorhouse, 'Rural medieval landscape', pp. 597-8,

602-6, 660-7, 676-7; George Redmond and David Hey, 'The opening-up of Scammonden, a Pennine moorland valley', *Landscapes* 2 (2001), pp. 65-9; Stinson, 'Assarting', pp. 57-8.

<sup>92</sup> For the possibility of this relationship of Walter to the sisters, see DCM, Haswell Ch. 102.

<sup>93</sup> DCM, Haswell Ch. 3, 4.

# Robert Bakewell (1725–1795) of Dishley: farmer and livestock improver

by David L. Wykes

## *Abstract*

Bakewell's reputation rests on the principle of in-and-in breeding and the establishment of the New Leicester sheep, in which he was assisted by a group of local improvers who were cousins and fellow Presbyterians. Although his high prices were controversial, before 1780 most of his rams were let for under ten guineas. Bakewell's success as a breeder was founded on his ability to meet market demands by producing a better beast for the butcher, but there was a decline in fecundity and meat quality. Doubts about his achievements have recently been expressed, but the Border Leicester remains the most successful modern long-wool cross.

Lord Ernle, in his classic study of English agriculture, identified five individuals – Jethro Tull, Lord Townshend, Robert Bakewell of Dishley, Thomas Coke and Arthur Young – as particularly associated with ‘the farming progress of the period’.<sup>1</sup> Bakewell, unlike the other heroes of the Agricultural Revolution, has only received a partial reassessment by historians, limited mainly to a qualification of his role as a leading breeder and the success of his new livestock breeds. There is no recent study of his life or work. The result has been a rather unbalanced view of his achievements. To a large extent this is understandable considering the paucity of the information available. Although a considerable amount of literature relating to Bakewell was published during his lifetime, or within a few years of his death, much of it was hagiographic, and he remains a shadowy figure for whom few authentic personal details survive, particularly for his early career. Even those who had known him well expressed regret that they knew so little about the most important events of his life. It is unfortunate that George Culley, an early pupil, failed to persuade Bakewell's nearest acquaintances to publish a biography. The only major modern biography of Bakewell, by H. C. Pawson, was published more than 40 years ago. Using new evidence, from local sources and contemporary authorities, together with a reassessment of more familiar accounts, this study seeks to provide a fresh consideration of Bakewell and his contribution to eighteenth-century livestock breeding.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. E. Prothero [later Lord Ernle], *English Farming Past and Present* (sixth edn by G. E. Fussell and O. R. McGregor, 1961), p. 149. I am very grateful to Professor John Beckett for his comments on my article and for allowing me to see a copy of his unpublished 2002 New Dishley Society Lecture, ‘Robert Bakewell and Agricultural Productivity: new thoughts on a well-worn theme’.

<sup>2</sup> J. Hunt, *Agricultural memoirs; or history of the Dishley System. In answer to Sir John Saunders Sebright, Bart., M.P.* (Nottingham, 1812), p. 119; BL, Add. MS 35,131, fo. 21r; George Culley, Eastfield, to Arthur Young, 18 Feb. 1811; H. C. Pawson, *Robert Bakewell: pioneer livestock breeder* (1957).

## I

Robert Bakewell was born at Dishley near Loughborough on 23 May 1725. The only surviving son of Robert and Rebecca Bakewell, he belonged to a family of successful improving farmers. Dishley Grange had been acquired in 1683 by Sir Ambrose Phillipps as part of the Garendon Estate. Bakewell's grandfather, also Robert, became tenant in 1709, succeeding Benjamin Clerk, who was one of the most advanced farmers of his day. Bakewell, like his father, was a trustee and subscriber of the Warner's Lane Presbyterian (later Unitarian) Meeting in Loughborough. Bakewell presumably learnt much from his father, who 'had always the reputation of being one of the most ingenious and able farmers of his neighbourhood', but probably Robert senior's greatest contribution was to allow his son to make a series of tours to improve his knowledge of contemporary agriculture. Little is known about these journeys, apparently made throughout much of England, and even to Ireland and Holland, but it is possible to guess at their importance in providing Bakewell with information on regional farming differences and the latest techniques and developments. He was to continue the practice of making tours for the rest of his life. Most accounts accept that Bakewell was managing the Dishley estate before his father's death in 1773. He not only inherited a family tradition of practical improving farming dating from at least his grandfather, but also the tenancy of what was probably already a model farm for the period.<sup>3</sup>

It is clear as well that the changes in farming which took place in Leicestershire and the Midlands during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as a result of the conversion of arable to grassland, and also early enclosure, were important in encouraging improvements in livestock breeding. Conversion to pasture increased the significance of grazing and therefore encouraged farmers to improve their livestock, while enclosure enabled farmers to control their livestock and to undertake selective breeding and improvements to grassland management and stock feeding. Enclosure also allowed greater opportunities for experiments in livestock breeding. The changes were particularly rapid in Leicestershire and, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, at least a quarter of all parishes in the county were already enclosed, with about another third at least partially enclosed. Dishley was enclosed by the early sixteenth century and the village depopulated.<sup>4</sup>

The Bakewell family farmed about 450 acres of land at Dishley, with the considerable

<sup>3</sup> J. Nichols, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester* (4 vols in eight, London, 1795–1815), III (ii), pp. 757, 801; E. Lisle, *Observations in Husbandry* (London, 1756); Squire De Lisle, 'Robert Bakewell', *JRASE* 136 (1975), pp. 56–7; Leicestershire RO (hereafter LRO), Will 1716C, will and inventory of Robert Bakewell of Dishley, yeo.; Pawson, *Bakewell*, p. xiv; W. H. Burgess, *History of the Loughborough Unitarian Congregation* (1908), pp. 11–12, 24, 32–4. Pawson suggested that Bakewell was educated at the nonconformist academy in Kibworth under Philip Doddridge, but Doddridge did not teach at Kibworth, which, having moved to Hinckley in 1723, closed in 1723 on the death of John Jennings, the

tutor, and Bakewell is not included in the list of Doddridge's students at Northampton, see T. Stedman, 'List of the pupils educated by P. Doddridge, D.D.', *Monthly Repository*, 10 (1815), pp. 686–88; *Gentleman's Mag.* 65 (ii) (1795), p. 969; Hunt, *Agricultural memoirs*, p. 35; W. Pitt, *A General view of the agriculture of the county of Leicester* (1809), p. 216.

<sup>4</sup> J. Thirsk, 'Agrarian History, 1540–1950' in *VCH Leicestershire*, II (1954), pp. 220–31, 255; W. G. Hoskins (ed.), *Essays in Leicestershire agrarian history* (1948); J. Thirsk (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, V (ii), 1640–1750 (1984), ch. 4. This paragraph has profited from Professor Beckett's comments.

privilege of being able to plough 250 acres without restraint. The estate was extended when the Mill lands were acquired in 1786, mainly to increase the area irrigated.<sup>5</sup> Although Bakewell had the privilege to plough over half his acreage, according to Young in 1771 he only ploughed about a quarter, including 15 acres of wheat, 25 acres of spring corn and 30 acres of turnips. Since Bakewell brought in neither hay nor straw, much of the arable land had to be laid down to grass to support the substantial amount of livestock he kept. In 1771 he had a total of about 60 horses, 150 cattle of all sorts and 400 large sheep. The principal use of his arable was for the provision of winter feed, particularly cabbages, which Bakewell found more satisfactory than turnips. Bakewell's floating meadows or irrigation scheme were particularly important in providing winter feed. By a series of hatches and channels, areas of meadow were flooded in Autumn to provide an early 'bite' of grass in March in the crucial period between the end of the previous year's hay and before the first grass was generally available in April. The availability of feedstock during this critical period affected the level of livestock any grazier could carry during the winter. During the 1770s Bakewell irrigated between 60 and 80 acres a year, later raised to about 200 acres after the acquisition of the Mill lands. According to Young, the irrigation scheme was first begun by Bakewell's father and afterwards extended in several stages by Bakewell himself, who had studied the technique in the west of England under George Boswell, the acknowledged expert on floating meadows. The cost of construction would have been considerable, though annual maintenance costs were not excessive. Bakewell alleged that floating raised the value of his grass by 20s. per acre (which he claimed was more than the original construction costs of the main carriers and intersections), while annual maintenance, involving the scouring and repairing of the carriers and drains, was about 5s. per acre.<sup>6</sup>

## II

Bakewell's reputation, both during his life and subsequently, has rested on his work with livestock breeds, particularly sheep. Before the 1780s, however, he was also much concerned with improving cattle and horses and even pigs. Indeed, the earliest direct evidence of his success in breeding comes from his work with horses. In 1763 he advertised in the *Leicester Journal* two black colts as available for stud at one and five guineas respectively. Two years later he won first prize at the Ashby Horse Show. Just as he did not begin with a farm without

<sup>5</sup> *Leicester J.*, 3 Feb. 1781; The Editor [Arthur Young], 'A ten days tour to Mr Bakewell's', *Annals of Agriculture*, 6 (1786), pp. 490, 493; A. Young, *The farmer's tour through the east of England* (4 vols, London, 1771), I, pp. 121, 123–4, 128; [A. Young], 'A month's tour to Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, &c.', *Annals of Agriculture*, 16 (1791), p. 579; Northumberland RO [hereafter NRO], ZCU 1, 'Journal of a tour by George Culley from Denton to Leicestershire, Midlands, Cambridgeshire &c in company of William Charge, 20 June–25 July 1771', sv. Wednesday 26 June 1771, now printed in A. Orde (ed.), *Matthew and George Culley travel journals and letters, 1765–1798* (Records of Social and Economic History, new

ser. 35, 2002), p. 67.

<sup>6</sup> Young, *Farmer's Tour*, I, p. 127; Editor, 'Ten day tour', p. 490; Pitt, *General view*, p. 32; Young, *Farmer's tour*, I, p. 124; W. Marshall, *The rural economy of the Midland counties* (2 vols, London, 1790), I, pp. 284–5; G. Culley, *Observations on livestock, containing hints for choosing and improving the best breeds and the most useful kinds of domestic animals* (London, 1786), p. 143; W. Redhead, R. Laing and W. Marshall jun., *Observations on the different breeds of sheep, and the state of sheep farming in some of the principal counties of England* (Edinburgh, 1792), pp. 33–4.

improvements, nor did he start with unimproved stock for he used animals already partially improved by others. The foundation of Bakewell's improved breed of horses is traditionally said to have originated with Lord Chesterfield, who, when ambassador to The Hague in the late 1720s, sent six Zealand mares to his family estate at Bretby in Derbyshire. Bakewell is said to have been greatly impressed by the progeny he saw 20 or 30 years later, and to have travelled to Holland and part of Flanders with George Salsbury of Heather, returning with six mares to improve his own stock. He also used Mr Hood's 'Old Blind Horse', which, although it played a rather obscure part in the history of the modern Shire Horse, was one of the best known early studs in the Midlands and sired Bakewell's celebrated horse 'G'. Hood was probably John Hood of Bardon Hall, the leading patron of the Bardon Park Meeting, and also, like Bakewell, a Presbyterian.<sup>7</sup>

Bakewell is rather more celebrated for his work with Longhorn Cattle. Marshall's comment that 'Mr Bakewell is well known to have got the lead, as a breeder of cattle, through means of the Canley stock' belonging to John Webster has often been noted, but Bakewell's friend and former pupil, George Culley, told Arthur Young that the existing yellow breed of Dishley cattle were in fact superior in their fattening properties to the Canley stock. The foundation of Webster's herd is said to have come from the purchase of six cows from Sir Thomas Gresley of Drakelow. According to Hunt, in 1766 Bakewell viewed Webster's stock while the owner was away, selecting six cows, which Culley later purchased on his behalf. Bakewell kept four and allowed Robert Fowler of Little Rollright near Chipping Norton to purchase the other two. From this stock Bakewell in-bred his famous bull 'Twopenny'. Fowler was to make repeated use of 'Twopenny', but after 1778 he kept entirely to his own stock. His bull, 'Shakespeare', was considered in 1790 to be 'the best stockgetter the Midland district ever knew'. Bakewell made use of Lancashire and Westmorland as well as Canley stock to improve his cattle, and by 1771 Young claimed 'his breed of cattle is famous throughout the kingdom'. But despite exports to Ireland and Jamaica, later to prove his financial downfall, his longhorns were of regional rather than national importance. By the 1780s Fowler had surpassed him, and it was generally acknowledged that when Fowler died in 1791 he had the finest longhorn herd in the country. His dispersal sale was one of the greatest auctions of improved stock during the eighteenth century. After Fowler's death the lead was gained by Thomas Princep of Croxall on the Derbyshire-Staffordshire border, who had also made considerable use of Bakewell's stock. Russell has argued that Bakewell did little to improve the longhorn, which was already established in the north of England before Bakewell bred his own successful longhorn in the 1760s, and that in any case he applied breeding methods already in use in Lancashire. Russell, however, was unaware of the existing superior qualities of Bakewell's own yellow breed of cattle at

<sup>7</sup> Marshall, *Rural economy*, I, pp. 306–7, 452–3; *Leicester J.*, 23 Apr. 1763, 23 Nov. 1765, 5 Apr. 1783; NRO, ZCU 1, 'George Culley's tour into Leicestershire', sv. 19 [Nov.] 1765, pr. Orde (ed.), *Culley travel journals and letters*, p. 43; Hunt, *Agricultural memoirs*, pp. 120–5; Pitt, *General view*, p. 283; Culley, *Observations*, pp. 13–14; K. Chivers, *The Shire Horse* (1976), pp. 549–54; D. L. Wykes, 'Bardon Park Meeting House: the registration of Nonconformist places of worship under the Act of Toleration (1689)', *Trans. Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* (hereafter TLAHS), 66 (1990), pp. 33–4; PRO, C54/6185/5, enrolment of trust deeds of Bardon Park meeting house, 1765.

Dishley before he acquired stock from Canley. He also perhaps ignores the use Fowler and Princep made of Bakewell's progeny.<sup>8</sup>

Bakewell achieved his greatest success with sheep, although it was also the part of his work which engendered the most controversy. The origins of his improved stock were obtained from Joseph Allom of Clifton in Nottinghamshire: 'the first', according to Marshall, 'who *distinguished* himself in the Midland District for a superior breed of sheep'. Allom obtained his ewes from Nathaniel Stone of Goadby Marwood, whose nephew and great-nephews were later leading improvers of sheep associated with Bakewell. Bakewell also purchased rams to improve his stock during his tours through England, particularly from Lincolnshire. He is said to have purchased a ram from Mr Stow of Long Broughton which formed the basis of his own improved breed.<sup>9</sup>

### III

The other major figures involved in livestock improvement in the Midlands were identified by contemporary agricultural commentators in their accounts and surveys. There is no doubt that Thomas Paget (1732–1814) of Ibstock was Robert Bakewell's closest friend and breeding associate. George Culley recognised that because Paget was of a similar age to Bakewell and 'had been intimately connected & acquainted with him from his first commencement in business' as well as being related, 'they were always particular friend[s]'. Paget and Bakewell were in fact second cousins and fellow Presbyterians. Both families had undertaken the mutual services of executor and trustee practised by close friends and families. Paget was a considerable improving farmer in his own right as well as a noted livestock breeder, whose farm was visited and described by Marshall and other agricultural writers as an example for husbandry, drainage and other forms of improvement. Indeed in the case of Longhorn cattle Paget may ultimately have exceeded Bakewell. Although he used Dishley bulls extensively, he also greatly used 'the Hampshire Bull' as well as a bull bred by Princep. He bought Fowler's bull Shakespeare and bred his own bull Shakespeare from it, which was sold at his dispersal sale in November 1793 for 400 guineas to a partnership of six farmers, most of whom were his fellow Leicestershire improvers. He also assisted Bakewell in his livestock breeding experiments. In 1776 he took a ram of Bakewell's called 'Dishley P' for 10 or 15 guineas. 'The price at the time was considered high'. Two years later he bred again from the same ram demonstrating that prejudices

<sup>8</sup> Marshall, *Rural economy*, I, pp. 318–9, 320–6, 322, 325; N. Russell, *Like engend'ring like. Heredity and animal breeding in early modern England* (1986), pp. 146, 198; Warwickshire RO, DR177/2, Parish register of Stoneleigh, John Webster, esq., buried 23 Nov. 1768; [A. Young], *On the husbandry of three celebrated farmers, Messrs Bakewell, Arbuthnot, and Duckett: being a lecture read to the Board of Agriculture, on Thursday, June 6, 1811* (London, 1811), p. 5; Hunt, *Agricultural memoirs*,

pp. 115–7; Oxfordshire RO, Misc Lanc IX/1, R. Parry, *Particulars of the breeding stock, late the property of Mr Robert Fowler, of Little Rollright, in the county of Oxford, deceased* (Shipston on Stour, 1791), Preface; Young, *Farmer's tour*, I, pp. 110–12; Pitt, *General view*, pp. 220–1

<sup>9</sup> Marshall, *Rural economy*, I, p. 381; Young, *Farmer's tour*, I, p. 117; [Young], *Husbandry of three celebrated farmers*, p. 9.

concerning consanguinity were unfounded. Paget was so successful that after he retired from breeding in 1793 he helped found a bank.<sup>10</sup>

Bakewell was closely related to the other leading improvers in Leicestershire. The mother of John Stone of Quorndon was a Sarah Bakewell. Stone himself was the nephew of Nathaniel Stone of Goadby, and like his uncle a leading breeder. His three sons, John Parnham Stone of Quorndon, Thomas Stone of Barrow-upon-Soar and Samuel Stone of Knighton, were also leading breeders. The mother of Robert Burgess of Hugglescote was Katherine Bakewell, and his wife, Catherine, was the daughter of Nathaniel Stubbins of Holme Pierrepont in Nottinghamshire. Both Burgess and Stubbins were prominent breeders. Burgess was an executor of John Stone. John Stone and the Burgess and Paget families were all members of the Bardon Park Presbyterian Meeting near Markfield. Stubbins was a member of High Pavement Presbyterian Meeting in Nottingham. Thomas Stone belonged to Warner's Lane Meeting, Loughborough, like Bakewell, and Samuel and John Parnham Stone to the Presbyterian Great Meeting in Leicester.<sup>11</sup>

It is clear that Bakewell's closest associates were fellow Presbyterians, and in many cases his cousins. The advantages to Bakewell of their support were considerable. By hiring his tups and bulls they helped to disseminate his progeny. Without their assistance, and the assistance of the many livestock breeders in different parts of the country, the Dishley or new Leicester sheep, for example, would never have been disseminated so widely and so rapidly. They also provided Dishley stock for those farmers unable to afford Bakewell's prices. Perhaps more important for the development of the new Leicester breed, these breeders helped to extend the gene pool with which Bakewell worked, by providing him with further stock bred on his own principles with which to experiment. Accounts by contemporary agricultural commentators provide evidence of the links between Bakewell and his closest supporters, but the pedigrees of the

<sup>10</sup> Marshall, *Rural economy*, I, pp. 192, 195, 233, 261, 287, 325, 384–6; Pitt, *General view*, pp. 44, 250; BL, Add. MS 35,131, fo. 22, George Culley, Eastfield, to Arthur Young, 18 Feb. 1811; LRO, DG47, Paget of Ibstock MSS; Editor, 'A week in Norfolk', *Annals of Agriculture* 19 (1793), pp. 444–5; G. Garrard, *A Description of the different varieties of Oxen* (London, 1800), p. 2; LRO, 109'30/95, 'Mr Paget's estate', 1775; Nottingham University Library, MS 9/4, printed auction catalogue with purchasers and sale prices; *Catalogue of the capital stock of long horned cows, heifers & stirks; bull & bull calves; team of oxen; breeding ewes; and cart mares belonging to Thomas Paget, Esq. of Ibstock, in the county of Leicester; which will be sold by auction, by Mr Boott, (without reserve) on the premises, on Thursday the 14th, Friday the 15th, and Saturday the 16th days of November, 1793* (Loughborough, [1793]); Hunt, *Agricultural memoirs*, pp. 111–12, 118; W. Gardiner, *Music and friends, or pleasant recollections of a dilettante* (2 vols, Leicester, 1838), I, pp. 242–3; D. L. Wykes, 'Banking in

nineteenth-century Leicester', *TLAHS* 70 (1996), pp. 150–1.

<sup>11</sup> LRO, Pedigree of Burgess Family; *Leicester J.*, 20 Sept. 1777; PR/T/1769/190, Will of Nathaniel Stone of Goadby Marwood, gent.; PR/T/1783/223, Will of John Stone of Quorndon, gent.; Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, III (i), p. 102, n. 5; PRO, RG4/1173, Bardon Park and Ashby de la Zouch Presbyterian Meetings, Register of births and baptisms, 1756–1837; RG4/1588, 137, High Pavement Presbyterian (later Unitarian) Chapel, Nottingham, Register of Baptisms, 1723–1777, 1760–1828. Sarah Bakewell married Samuel Stone at Swepstone on 7 January 1725, and Katharine Bakewell married Robert Burgess at Hugglescote and Donnington on 18 October 1733, see parish registers. It is not possible to identify the exact relationship to Robert Bakewell in the absence of any baptismal registers for Bardon Park, Loughborough and Mountsorrel for this period. It was usual for marriages involving Presbyterians to take place in the parish church.

animals themselves, cited in contemporary advertisements, demonstrate the extent of the interdependence between the leading Midland livestock breeders.

#### IV

The attributes sought by Bakewell in his breeds were summarised by his pupil, George Culley, in 1771, as those

that make themselves the soonest fat, were always most esteemed by himself, but are now liked by other people, that they now do not pay so much regard to horns, hydes, legs, &c. &c: but those are accounted best, that pay most money for their keep, that such as are descended from the best kinds generally prove best, but good backs, hips, form of the ribs, shoulder ... &c. &c. are w[ha]t he [Bakewell] calls Essentials.

The main qualities desired were beauty and utility of form, texture of flesh (or quality of meat) and most importantly the capacity to mature quickly: 'that is, a natural propensity to acquire a state of fatness, at an early age, and, when at full keep, in a short space of time'. It was believed by breeders that these attributes could only be obtained by careful breeding. Bakewell founded his reputation on the principle of 'in-and-in breeding', the persistent inbreeding with closely related animals. This is usually taken to mean sire to daughter, or son to dam or brother to sister, although there was some dispute over the exact meaning of the term. The major advantage of inbreeding, especially in experimental breeding, is the speed with which results can be achieved in comparison with cross-breeding. Breeding in-and-in will strengthen the good properties, but also unfortunately the bad, and in the hands of an inexperienced breeder the results could be disastrous. Much of the success of Bakewell and the other Midland livestock breeders stemmed from their ability to identify and fix the attributes they wished to develop. Bakewell was not the originator of in-breeding. Marshall claimed it originated at Newmarket with race-horse breeding, though according to Russell it was not applied originally in the development of the Thoroughbred. Certainly inbreeding was practised in Lincolnshire at an earlier date than Leicestershire, though Hugo Meynell was inbreeding fox hounds during the 1760s for his Quorn Hunt. Bakewell was, however, largely responsible for the more general acceptance of the principle. Despite earning most of his revenue from letting rams for tupping, Bakewell was said, paradoxically, to have been against cross-breeding.<sup>12</sup>

The letting of breeding stock, rather than its sale, was essential if breeds were not only to be improved but also to be disseminated throughout the country. Letting enabled the breeder to retain his best animals to experiment with and to improve his basic stock, and so avoid the

<sup>12</sup> NRO, ZCU 1, 'Journal of a tour by George Culley ... 1771', sv. Friday 12 July 1771, pr. Orde (ed.), *Culley travel journals and letters*, p. 77; Marshall, *Rural economy*, I, pp. 297–9, 300, 301–2; Sir John S. Sebright, *The art of improving the breeds of domestic animals* (London, 1809), pp. 9–10; Russell, *Like engend'ring like*, pp. 103–4, 220; J. A. Perkins, *Sheep farming in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Lincolnshire* (Occasional Papers in Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 1977) p. 37; C. B. D. Ellis, *Leicestershire and the Quorn Hunt* (1951) pp. 14–15; Redhead *et al.*, *Observations on the different breeds of sheep*, pp. 37–8.

temptation of disposing of the finest animals for high prices. As Bakewell told Jasper Palfrey of Fenton, a leading breeder of the unimproved old Warwickshire sheep, during a dispute,

if you ever had the best in your county, why let them go into any other? – for I think, and am persuaded many others are of the same opinion, that it is of less importance to know where the best came from, than where they now are.

As a result of letting, superior stock became available to other interested breeders instead of being confined to the use of its proprietor alone and, as a result, its progeny circulated widely improving other stock. It also enabled other breeders to experiment far more extensively than would have been possible if they had had to purchase all the animals they used.<sup>13</sup>

Ram letting led to the emergence of specialist breeders or tupmen. '[I]t generally happens that a breeder of male stock ... is likewise a dairyman, and frequently a grazier; Mr Bakewell being the only man, in this district, who confines his practice solely to breeding and letting.' Unlike the commercial farmer, he was not obliged to keep most of his animals as replacements. If necessary he could drastically cull his breeding stock in a way that no livestock farmer could contemplate. Although letting developed especially as a result of the active tup market it applied to cattle and horses as well. The practice of letting male stock did not originate with Bakewell. It was almost certainly first practised with stallions for stud and appears to have been common in Lincolnshire before it is found in Leicestershire. Bakewell, according to Marshall, did at least popularise the practice of letting tups in the Midlands as well as adopting the practice for cattle. Bakewell let his first ram for 16s. at Leicester Fair to a Mr Wildbore of Illston-on-the-Hill. All the authorities agree on the price, but there is considerable dispute over the date. Arthur Young claimed it occurred as early as 1744, but Hunt, who knew Bakewell more intimately, suggested around 1760. Bakewell also let a further two rams the same day for 17s. 6d. Not all breeders refused to sell. Fowler sold his celebrated longhorn cattle, and even Bakewell sold occasionally if the circumstances were right. In 1771, and again in 1786, he sold some of his bulls to a Jamaican landowner.<sup>14</sup>

The high prices at which his stock was let remains one of the most controversial aspects of Bakewell's activities. The most extraordinary prices were paid for hiring his rams. Before 1765 his prices were above average, though still modest. In that year Culley, after some hesitation, agreed to pay 8 Guineas for a ram, but as late as 1780 most were still let for under 10 Guineas. Thereafter prices rose rapidly. In 1784 prices were between 80 and 90 Guineas a ram, though one was let for 100 Guineas. Two year later, in 1786, two principal breeders each hired a third interest for 100 Guineas, Bakewell retaining the other third for his own use, so limiting the number of ewes tupped and helping to value the whole ram at 300 Guineas. In a situation where demand for Bakewell's best tups so completely outstripped all supply, prices not surprisingly jumped dramatically. In 1786 Bakewell only let 20 rams, but made £1000. In 1789 he received 3,000 Guineas, of which 2,000 Guineas was for seven rams, with his three best rams alone accounting for 1,200 Guineas. Although his prices for horses and cattle were less

<sup>13</sup> *Leicester J.*, 10 Oct. 1789; Marshall, *Rural economy*, I, p. 304.

<sup>14</sup> Marshall, *Rural economy*, pp. 303, 417 & n. †, 334;

BL. Add. MS 34,863, fo. 107r; [Young], *Husbandry of three celebrated farmers*, p. 4; Hunt, *Agricultural memoirs*, pp. 35, 37, 115.

spectacular, Bakewell can have had little reason to complain. His celebrated bull, 'Twopenny', was let at 5 Guineas a cow, while other bulls were generally let for the season at half that sum.<sup>15</sup>

Naturally such prices aroused considerable controversy, if not animosity. Young was in favour of high prices as he felt they were an incentive to breeders to make improvements and to take greater care in breeding. Bakewell himself believed that the only way to improve the breed of cattle was to keep up the price,

for, if the price is low, people send any kind of cows, and if the product fails, the bull is blamed; but if the price is high, they are particular, and send none but the very best, which is the only method to improve the breed.

Privately, he was against public discussion of high prices as he felt disappointed breeders, if they could not have the best, would ignore the remainder. Other commentators pointed out that the high prices, together with the refusal of the leading breeders to allow ewes as well as rams to be used, were serious obstacles to the spread of the new breeds. Many, though, saw Bakewell and his associate breeders as little more than opportunists, more interested in large profits than encouraging the spread of their new improved stock. Certainly, Bakewell mastered the task of maintaining high prices. After 1788 he no longer fixed prices, but left his customers to bid what they chose, before he decided whether it was acceptable. This system was considered particularly unfair and caused much ill-feeling.<sup>16</sup>

Since in the opinion of Bakewell's contemporaries his own stock was at the pinnacle of the livestock market, he set the standard with his prices. It was essential for his fellow breeders that he maintained or increased his prices as they were in no position to charge the same rates. The amount they received was dependant on the valuation his stock received. As George Culley, always quick to increase his own profits, succinctly expressed the matter to his brother:

The very high prices Mr B. has and may let at staggers all his neighbours and what it will come to I know not, but the higher he lets the better for those that have of the same family, and the higher the sheep will stand in credit.

Though Marshall felt that the breeders who gave the greatest sums 'were playing a high game', the prices they paid were not completely ridiculous. 'The *high* prices are not given by graziers but by ram breeders for the purpose of getting rams to let to graziers. The *highest* only given by the principal breeders'. Most prices were between one and ten guineas, and supposing a grazer 'paid the top rate of 10 Guineas and that ram served 100 ewes or even gets 100 rams – the cost of getting amounts to no more than 2s. a head'.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> NRO, ZCU 1, 'George Culley's Tour into Leicestershire', sv. 4 [Oct.] 1765, pr. Orde (ed.), *Culley travel journals and letters*, p. 32; Marshall, *Rural economy*, I, p. 426; N. Scarfe (ed), *A Frenchman's year in Suffolk. French impressions of Suffolk life in 1784* (Suffolk Record Society, 30, 1988), p. 151; NRO, ZCU 9, George Culley, Dishley, to his brother, Matthew, sv. 3 [Jan. 1785], pr. Orde, *Culley travel journals and letters*, pp. 225–6; Marshall, *Rural economy*, I, p. 427; Young, *Farmers tour*, I, p. 112.

<sup>16</sup> [Young], 'Month's tour', pp. 594–5; J. Monk, *Gen-*

*eral View of the agriculture of the county of Leicester with observations on the means of their improvement* (London, 1794), p. 29; Robinson Library, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Misc Mss 7, Robert Bakewell to George Culley, 8 Feb. 1787, 18 Nov. 1789, printed in Pawson, *Bakewell*, pp. 108, 146; *Annals of Agriculture* 16 (1791), pp. 589–90.

<sup>17</sup> NRO, ZCU 9, George Culley, Dishley, to his brother, Matthew, 18 Nov. 1784; *ibid.*, [20 Oct. 1784], pr. Orde, *Culley travel journals and letters*, pp. 199, 188; Marshall, *Rural Economy*, I, pp. 431, 428–9.

## V

Despite high prices he was receiving, Bakewell's finances proved to be insecure. In 1776 Bakewell suffered a major disaster when a Commission of Bankruptcy was issued against him. According to one source it was caused by the failure of certain customers to pay for the animals hired, in particular a number of Scottish and Irish debtors. Others have suggested his legendary hospitality was to blame, for there was no inn at Dishley for visitors who came to see his farm. Although the bad debts of some of his more distant customers may finally have proved critical, it is clear his finances had been very insecure for five or more years before his bankruptcy. In 1771 a visitor noted that Bakewell had been run very low, to the extent that a number of his detractors in the neighbourhood had given out that he was bankrupt. He had already mortgaged the paternal estate at Sweptstone for £500 in 1770. Though he survived on that occasion, the tremendous overheads arising from his experiments, together with the losses from bad debts and possibly disease, meant that his finances were precarious. Furthermore, he lacked the resources of a major landowner, such as Coke of Holkham, to withstand any serious losses. There is also evidence that he was guilty of extravagance, even mismanagement. George Culley following a conversation with Samuel Huskinson of Croxton during a visit to Dishley in 1765, concluded that 'Mr B[akewell] employs more men than he has any occasion for, he is without doubt at a most consumed expence, I suppose [he] pays more money in wages than rent'. Six years later Culley noted that Bakewell carried on his farming with 'surprising order and regularity', but he thought it 'rather to be admired than imitated'. Bakewell's annual tours, certainly in later years, were also expensive.<sup>18</sup>

Although Bakewell's Commission of Bankruptcy was issued in June 1776, the settlement of his affairs was unreasonably protracted. Part of his stock was originally offered for sale in March 1777, but nothing was apparently sold. In April 1778 one of his creditors, John Smellie of Nottingham, complained that although a dividend of 10s. 0d. had been promised in September 1777 and a further 6s. 0d. in May 1778, nothing had in fact been paid. This apparently prompted notice of the auction of part of Bakewell's livestock at Nottingham in July 1778, but it was not actually sold until March 1779 and then at Dishley. A ten-year old stallion was sold for 140 Guineas and a bull for 130, but it was acknowledged that 'notwithstanding the seeming high prices these articles sold for, many capital judges are of opinion they were remarkably cheap'. In August 1779 all his rams, over 100 in total, were offered for sale. This, however, still did not complete the disposal of his assets. Not until nearly two years later was the remainder of the stock and lease of Dishley Grange offered for sale. Again little apparently happened, and in June 1783 the long-suffering Smellie placed a further advertisement in the *Leicester Journal* complaining that the assignees had decided to dispose of all of Bakewell's stock by Lady Day 1780,

<sup>18</sup> Scarfe (ed.), *Frenchman's year in Suffolk*, p. 151; Pawson, *Bakewell*, p. 41; [John Holt of Walton near Liverpool], 'The Dishley farm', *Gentleman's Mag.* 63 (ii) (1793), p. 793; [John Lawrence], *Necrology, being memoirs of the lives of eminent and extraordinary characters* (London, 1805), pp. 202–3; 'Observations made at Mr Bakewell's, in 1771', *Annals of Agriculture* 28 (1797), p. 592; NRO, ZCU 1, 'Journal of a tour by George Culley ... 1771', sv. 23 [Jun. 1771], pr. Orde (ed.), *Culley travel journals and letters*, p. 67; LRO, 1 D 32/136, 'Abstract of Title of an estate at Sweptstone mortgaged by Robt Bakewell to Mrs Elizabeth Aston' (1774); NRO, ZCU 1, 'George Culley's tour into Leicestershire', 29 Sept. 1765, sv. 19 [October], pr. Orde (ed.), *Culley travel journals and letters*, p. 37.

yet in a patient expectation of an equal distribution, the creditors have waited above seven years, since the interest of their money, lent on Mr Bakewell's simple securities, terminated; but to this day they have not received eight shillings in the pound, towards the payment of their principal.<sup>19</sup>

After a meeting of creditors at Loughborough it was agreed to replace the existing individuals acting in the Commission. Bakewell was fortunate to have been previously associated with four of the five assignees of his bankrupt estate. John Ashworth of Daventry, son of the celebrated nonconformist tutor, was a former pupil; Samuel Huskinson of Croxton was Bakewell's companion on his early Midland tours; William Bentley, the first regular banker in Leicester, was a fellow Presbyterian and treasurer of the Great Meeting congregation in that town; and Henry Walker of Thurmaston, a breeder and grazier, who was also associated with Bakewell. The fifth figure was William Hodges, another banker of Leicester. An examination of the original assignees suggests some reasons for the inordinate delay. Bentley was too old to travel far from home, while Huskinson was said to be rather infirm and not competent to undertake the administration of the estate on his own. Ashworth kept a large and busy inn on the Chester road at Daventry, nearly 40 miles from Dishley. In addition, both Walker and Hodges were subsequently declared bankrupt. Despite the change of assignees, Bakewell suffered no further disposals of his stock, following the earlier enforced auction of his stallions and bulls in March 1779, and he kept the lease of Dishley Grange. Bakewell appears to have owed the satisfactory outcome of his bankruptcy, which left his estate and experimental breeding stock largely intact, to the support of his friends and admirers in the world of agriculture. Sometime before 1784 Bakewell appealed for financial help to enable him to continue his life-long experiments. Over £1000 was raised and the subscribers included the Dukes of Rutland and Devonshire, the Earls of Hoptoun and Middleton, the leading agricultural patron Lord Sheffield, as well as such intimate associates of Bakewell as Thomas Paget. The final details of Bakewell's bankruptcy were still not resolved as late as August 1789.<sup>20</sup>

Bakewell's financial difficulties at first sight seem surprising in view of the considerable sums he demanded and received for letting his stock, but he was originally made bankrupt before his prices reached their highest levels. Moreover, the overheads for managing his experimental farm and improved flocks must have been extraordinary. As Culley explained to his brother in 1784,

Some people say Mr B will not be rich still without he makes [£]2,000 per an[num] of the letting scheme, and his stock in feeding etc. and 500 of corn, because they say the riding expenses is 500 at least with sending out tups. Housekeeping 500, labour 500 at least, I suppose more, and rent 500, therefore, without he makes more than 2,000 he can save nothing.

Letting tups or other animals could be a most uncertain business. Although Thomas Paget's

<sup>19</sup> Commission of Bankruptcy issued 3 June 1776, *Gentleman's Mag.*, 46 (1776), p. 531; *Leicester J.*, 1 Mar. 1777, 25 Apr., 12 Sept. 1778, 6 Mar., 3 Apr., 1779, 3 Feb. 1781, 7 Jun. 1783.

<sup>20</sup> PRO, B1/74, pp. 202–4, 101–2 (1783); /73, pp. 5–6;

Pawson, *Bakewell*, pp. 181–3, 175; Nottingham University Library, Manuscripts Department, MS24a, printed appeal from Robert Bakewell with subscription list and manuscript additions.

prices for tups let show an overall rise between 1784 and 1794, his actual income fluctuated widely, depending on how many tups he let or ewes were rammed. Like Bakewell, who only managed to let 20 rams in 1786, admittedly for £1000, Paget still had to maintain and feed the animals he failed to let. Other major overheads included the cost of showing, transporting stock to customers, and of buying or hiring tups to improve their own flocks. Furthermore, the flocks or herds of breeders were generally larger than those of most graziers, which led to the problem of additional winter feedstuffs, which could prove critical during periods of drought or poor harvest. Bakewell was himself seriously embarrassed by a major drought in 1771. Disease was also a major threat and could wreak havoc, destroying a life-time's work.<sup>21</sup>

## VI

If Bakewell was so successful in satisfying his contemporary customers, which, judging from the high prices he was able to charge, he was, why have his breeds very largely disappeared? To some extent the very success of Bakewell and his fellow breeders in changing and altering the old breeds is to blame for their disappearance. One of the most dramatic losses was the longhorn breed of cattle, which, from a dominant position in late eighteenth-century England, has almost entirely vanished. While Bakewell's work with cattle, unlike his sheep, was never more than of regional importance, he did achieve a number of successes. In his new improved longhorns he succeeded in increasing the rate with which flesh was put on, thinning the hide, reducing the heavy bone structure, changing the colour and the texture of the meat. But in producing a better beast for the butcher he failed to preserve a number of important secondary attributes. The main loss was a marked reduction in the milk yield (as Culley admitted) and a fall in the fecundity of the beast. Quite why in the long-term the shorthorn triumphed so completely over the longhorn is difficult to explain. Certainly the shorthorn was a more robust beast, better able to resist the worst side-effects of improvement, more amenable to change and able to retain the all important balance between the supply of beef and supply of milk. From the 1780s a number of breeders of the shorthorn, of which the work of the Colling Brothers, Charles and Robert, is best known, were able to improve the breed, making it more compact and weighty, without any sacrifice of milking quality, and so did much to promote it as a replacement for the longhorn breed.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to the improved longhorn, the New Leicester or Dishley breed of sheep was known nationally, and later even internationally, as crosses. The New Leicester sheep had a number of important and widely recognised attributes. A major asset of the new breed was its propensity to early maturity, yielding 'at least cost, and in the shortest possible time, the largest weight of meat'. New Leicesters were ready for the butcher after their second shearing (at about 27 months), compared with the unimproved Lincoln which was rarely mature before its third shearing (39 months). The advantages for the grazier was considerable. In the 1830s it was

<sup>21</sup> NRO, ZCU 9, George Culley to his brother Matthew, 26 Nov. 1784, pr. Orde (ed.), *Culley travel journals and letters*, p. 205; LRO, DE 365/279, Paget of Ibstock MSS, Thomas Paget's account book for 'Rams', 1784–94.

<sup>22</sup> 'Observations made at Mr Bakewell's in 1771', p. 589; R. Trow-Smith, *A History of British livestock husbandry, 1700–1900* (1959), pp. 47–9, 52–4, 236–7; E. Kerridge, *The Agricultural Revolution* (1976), p. 337.

calculated the early maturity of the New Leicester saved 20 per cent in production costs compared with the Cotswold. It must be admitted, though, that some farmers suggested that early slaughter was forced by the breed's deficiencies, particularly of the carcass running to fat, rather than by any considerations of profit. The breeders of the New Leicester also succeeded in reducing the proportion of offal, mainly by reducing the amount of bone, to the total carcass weight. The proportion of mutton to live weight for the New Leicester was about two-thirds compared with only about a half for the unimproved Lincoln. As a result the new breed was preferred by many butchers.<sup>23</sup>

Unfortunately, these merits were seriously reduced by a number of major defects in the new breed. To achieve their objectives of a quickly maturing animal, the breeders of the New Leicester sacrificed the quality of meat. It was said to be 'coarse in grain' and 'somewhat insipid to the taste', though opinions varied as to whether it was inferior to the other longwool breeds. The major criticism concerned the excess of fat, indeed the New Leicester had a tendency not merely to fatten quickly, but to run to fat if matured too long. Even Culley admitted that because of the amount of fat 'to weak appetites it is not so inviting as leaner mutton', but he maintained that the main consumers, the miner, the woolcomber and the nailer, showed a marked preference for fatty to lean mutton. In addition there is evidence that prices for tallow rose faster than meat prices until undermined by cheap imports. In reality the poor and the labouring classes could not be particular about quality. One manufacturer considered the amount of fat provided by the New Leicester an advantage for this very reason. Bakewell characteristically replied that 'I do not breed mutton for gentlemen, but for the public'. Furthermore, contrary to Bakewell's stated objectives, the New Leicester carried a greater proportion of mutton on the forequarters, rather than the more valuable hindquarters, and because it was a smaller, more compact animal, a further criticism concerned the size of the joints, which were considered too small to satisfy the growing size of families. The New Leicester also suffered from the hereditary problem of a low fecundity rate, inevitable as a result of the degree of inbreeding. Culley admitted that it was rare for more than a third of the breed's ewes to give birth to twins, and triplets were almost unknown. The situation did improve, but the New Leicesters remained less prolific than other breeds. This was a serious drawback to graziers who depended on rearing lambs for sale. In-breeding also caused other defects. The breed was considered 'delicate and unhealthy', and unable to bear exposure to poor weather conditions. There are even accounts of jackets being provided. The increase in carcass weight also reduced the mobility of the New Leicester. George Culley was rather shocked to be told by one farmer that 'the fattest sheep he saw were at Mr Codd's of Bakewell's kind, but said they were little, waddling toads'.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Trow-Smith, *History of British livestock husbandry*, p. 59; LRO, DE 2280/1, Bakewell, Dishley, to John Baker Holroyd, East Grinstead, 17 Dec. 1772; Perkins, *Sheep Farming*, pp. 44–5.

<sup>24</sup> Pitt, *General View*, p. 253; Kerridge, *Agricultural Revolution*, pp. 324–5; Culley, *Observations*, pp. 125–6; A. K. Copus, 'Changing markets and the development of sheep breeds in Southern England, 1750–1900', *AgHR* 37 (1989), pp. 37–8; Editor, 'Ten day tour', pp. 478–9;

J. A[nstie], *A letter to the Secretary of the Bath Agriculture Society, on the subject of a premium for the improvement of British wool* (London, 1791), p. v; R. M. Hartwell, *The Industrial Revolution and economic growth* (1972), p. 332; Redhead et al., *Observations on the different breeds of sheep*, p. 95; Perkins, *Sheep farming*, p. 47; NRO, ZCU 9, George Culley, Sawton, to his son Matthew, 10 Oct. 1784, pr. Orde (ed.), *Culley travel journals and letters*, pp. 182–3.

The main controversy surrounding the deficiencies of the New Leicesters concerned the quality and quantity of wool. The substantial gains made in the carcass weight were made at the expense of the wool yields. Compared with unimproved breeds, the average fleece weight was noticeably lower. Both Bakewell and Culley, among other breeders, doubted that carcass weight could be increased while maintaining wool yields. Bakewell is alleged to have gone so far as to say that 'it would be desirable to grow sheep without wool, and confine attention to the carcass exclusively'. There has, however, been a tendency to ignore the relative returns available during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from mutton and wool. After the 1780s wool prices fell as cotton became the country's staple export, while the increasing demand from urban and manufacturing populations raised the price of mutton. The demand for various types of woollen textile also changed. Woollen goods, which used short wools, suffered severe competition after the late eighteenth century from fine continental short wools, such as Merino. In contrast the demand for worsteds, using the longwools that the New Leicesters and other Midland sheep produced, increased considerably. At the same time selective breeding and changes in livestock farming, particularly the use of artificial grasses for forage, such as turnips and coleseed, led to alterations in meat and fleece. These changes were fortuitous since 'the carcass of the sheep proved more adaptable in the hands of the scientific breeders than the fleece, and a larger carcass inevitably meant longer, heavier and coarser wool'. This change in the fleece was to prove a boon as longwools were unique to Britain, unlike the fine shortwools which were subject to competition and the prices affected accordingly. In concentrating upon wool, Bakewell was clearly responding to changes in demand. The major defects of the New Leicesters, especially their poor fecundity and inferior meat quality, a weakness shared by the improved Midlands Longhorn cattle, together with the subsidiary but important consideration of low milk or wool yields, helped to ensure that these new breeds failed to survive in their pure form as modern breeds. The Midland longhorn has disappeared, but the remarkable powers of the New Leicester in the 'quality of imparting rapid and early fleshing and a general thriftiness to its progeny' was in crossing with other breeds to prove an enduring success.<sup>25</sup>

## VII

Considering the serious defects of his improved livestock, defects which his critics were not slow to note, how did Bakewell manage to maintain not only his standing with contemporaries, as reflected in the prices he was able to obtain, but also his historical reputation? Individuals such as John Ellman of Glynde in Sussex, whose achievement in refashioning the Southdown shortwool sheep from the 1780s was of great importance, have received nothing like the same recognition. One clear explanation is that Bakewell achieved much of his fame with his stock as a result of his success in publicising his new Leicester breeds. He was above all a pre-eminent publicist. It has been suggested that Bakewell was fortunate to attract the enthusiastic notice of agricultural commentators, such as Arthur Young, who established his reputation. Yet Bakewell already had a national reputation before Young first published an account of his farm

<sup>25</sup> John Luccock, *The nature and properties of wool illustrated: with a description of the English fleece* (Leeds, 1805), pp. 187, 199, 205; Culley, *Observations*, p. 174; Hartwell, *Industrial Revolution*, pp. 312, 317, 321, 326, 329.

in 1771, indeed Young stated that he received his first introduction to Bakewell in 1769 from the Marquis of Rockingham. As early as 1764 Bakewell had taken on a pupil from Northumberland, George Culley, who spent a year with him. Even before this date Bakewell's work appears to have been known in Northumberland. The Culleys later recorded that they hired their first tup from Bakewell in 1763. George Culley thought as early as 1765 that 'for value few or none are equal' to Bakewell in the quality of their livestock. An important factor in establishing Bakewell's early reputation appears to have been the extensive tours he undertook, and indeed maintained throughout his life. In 1784, for example, two young Frenchmen, sons of the Duc de Rochfoucauld, met Bakewell in Suffolk at the end of a tour of three or four hundred miles that the latter had made into Lincolnshire and East Anglia with Culley. In 1786 Young recorded meeting Bakewell several times in London.<sup>26</sup>

Of equal if not greater importance were the visits made to Dishley by writers and aspiring improvers. It is clear that Bakewell ran Dishley like an experimental farm, and not merely for his own satisfaction, but as a showpiece for his methods of farming and to encourage and influence others.

At Dishley, Mr Bakewell has improved a considerable tract of poor cold land, beyond anything I ever saw, or could have conceived, by this same mode of improvement;- and, ever ready to communicate his knowledge to the public, he has left proof pieces in different parts of his meadows, in order to convince people of the great importance and utility of this kind of improvement:- particularly, in one part he has been at pains to divide a rood of ground into twenty equal divisions, *viz.* two perches in each piece. It is so contrived that they can water the first, and leave the second unwatered; or miss the first, and water the second; and so on through all the 20 divisions; by which contrivance, you have the fairest and most unequivocal proofs of the good effects of improving ground by watering. And as Mr Bakewell is so kind as shew this experimental part to any gentleman, the curious, and those that have leisure, to visit this extraordinary place, where they will see many things worthy their attention and inspection besides watering meadows.

Bakewell also stocked other breeds of animal for comparison. Young noted in 1786 that Bakewell kept most British breeds of sheep, mainly to enable comparisons to be made of their feeding abilities, but they included breeds from Iceland and even the Cape. He also had a few shorthorns as 'patches' for comparative purposes or as foils to set off his own breeds. He had a 'museum' of pieces of outstanding animals in pickle, part of a neck of mutton or rump of beef belonging to a celebrated beast. He also experimented with crops, particularly turnips and

<sup>26</sup> S. Farrant, 'John Ellman of Glynde in Sussex', *AgHR* 26 (1978), pp. 77–88; [Young], *Husbandry of three celebrated farmers*, p. 4; D. J. Rowe, 'The Culleys, Northumberland farmers, 1767–1813', *AgHR* 19 (1979), p. 156; S. Macdonald, 'The role of the individual in agricultural change: the example of George Culley of Fenton, Northumberland' in H. S. A. Fox and R. A. Butlin (eds), *Change in the countryside: essays on rural England, 1500–1900* (Institute of British Geographers Special Publication, 10, 1979), pp. 8, 12, 14; NRO, ZCU 33, Pedigree of M. & G. Culley's tups, 1797; ZCU 1, 'George Culley's tour into Leicestershire', sv. 4 [Oct. 1765], pr. Orde (ed.), *Culley travel journals and letters*, p. 32; Scarfe (ed.), *Frenchman's year in Suffolk*, p. 149; ZCU 9, George Culley, Bury St Edmunds, to Matthew Culley, 23 Dec. 1784, pr. Orde (ed.), *Culley travel journals and letters*, pp. 221; Young, 'Ten day tour', p. 453; *Annals of Agriculture*, 15 (1790), p. 293.

cabbages, and with farm implements. Bakewell was not above a little gamesmanship. He purchased an 'outstandingly ugly' specimen of the Lincoln sheep for exhibition and comparison with his own stock at Dishley.<sup>27</sup> As a consequence, Dishley became a place to visit for the curious traveller interested in the modern developments of the age.

Bakewell also took positive steps to ensure that he would have an audience which would appreciate his beasts. He organised tup open days, with the viewing of carefully prepared displays of beasts. His reputation was also greatly served by newspaper controversies like Bakewell's well-publicised dispute with Charles Chaplin of Tathwell, a leading breeder of the Lincoln sheep. Bakewell was a skilled controversialist and not above casting aspersions on other breeders or their stock. He referred to the Lincoln breed of sheep as 'a barrowful of garbage'. Moreover, the publicity of high prices helped to fuel the 'Dishley craze' in the newspapers and periodicals. As Culley noted, 'people here are all infected with that kind of enthusiasm which [it] is perhaps lucky we were *innoculated* with long ago'. On the other hand his behaviour and personal idiosyncrasies at times helped to defeat his objectives. Many commentators were particularly critical of his secrecy, though they were not realistic if they expected Bakewell to reveal his ideas and methods. His manner of showing beasts individually rather than together, thereby preventing proper comparison, caused much offence. He also restricted his ram-showing days, particularly in later years, refusing to show his stock to casual visitors. The latter was supposedly due to the malign influence of the Dishley Ram Society.<sup>28</sup>

The role of the Dishley Society remains controversial, and the details about the setting up of the Society are unclear. It has been seen by historians as a device used by Bakewell to ramp or maintain the prices at which his rams were let. Although it is generally claimed that the Society was established in 1783, evidence from the earliest surviving minutes and Bakewell's correspondence with Culley suggests a later date, probably 1789. In June Bakewell told Culley that he was thinking of

a plan in which some ten more or less of my friends may concerned as a company and give me such a sum as shall be agreed upon for the use of all my rams they taking what they chuse for their own use and having what I can let all the others for.

The Society in fact took on a different form from that originally proposed by Bakewell, and in November 1789 he told Culley that progress in setting up the Society had been slow. 'For more than 12 months past meetings have been held at different places and very little done for want of unanimity', but the meeting on 13 November, the earliest recorded in the minute book,

achieved more than I expected would have been done considering the great variety of

<sup>27</sup> Editor, 'Ten days tour', pp. 482–3, 490–1, 478. Throsby, the county antiquarian, provided a similar description following a visit, John Throsby, *The supplementary volume to the Leicestershire Views: containing a series of excursions in the year 1790* (London, 1790), pp. 410–13; Culley, *Observations*, p. 143. Redhead *et al.*, *Observations on the different breeds of sheep*, pp. 34–5; 'Observations made at Mr Bakewell's in 1771', p. 591; Thomas Boys, 'Agricultural minutes', *Annals of*

*Agriculture*, 19 (1793), pp. 129–30, 132–3; [Holt], 'Dishley Farm', p. 793; A. Young, 'Sheep controversy between Messrs Chaplin and Bakewell', *Annals of Agriculture*, 10 (1788), p. 560.

<sup>28</sup> Perkins, *Sheep farming*, p. 48; *Cambridge Intelligencer*, 19 Oct. 1793, 12 Sep. 1795; NRO, ZCU 9, George Culley, Dishley, to his brother Matthew, 24 Oct. 1784, pr. Orde (ed.), *Culley travel journals and letters*, pp. 188–90.

opinions that have hitherto prevailed and want of confidence in each other being suspicious that each wanted to promote his own private interest without so much regard as ought to be paid to public good.

The earliest surviving minutes are dominated by the recording of new rules for the Society, which suggests it had only recently been founded. It is therefore difficult to see the Society as having a major role in helping to establish Bakewell's high fees, since he had already achieved his greatest prices by that date. It also is clear from the rules, which regulated the showing and letting of Bakewell's rams in favour of the Society's members, that they were more for maintaining prices for the benefit of Bakewell's fellow breeders rather than for Bakewell himself. Hence William Marshall comment in 1790, that the breeders who gave the greatest sums 'were playing a high game – running a hard race – for the pride and profit of being leader, when Mr Bakewell is not'.<sup>29</sup>

### VIII

Any final assessment of Bakewell's achievements is necessarily mixed. The most recent study of heredity and animal breeding by Nicholas Russell concluded that the most dramatic breed improvements took place during the eighteenth century, but cast doubt on Bakewell's achievements in selective breeding. Despite Bakewell's emphasis upon selecting stock for growth and food conversion rates, Russell pointed out that Bakewell lacked the means to measure conversion efficiency or the genetic understanding to select for it, though Russell believed that it was the realisation of the importance of this character and the desirability of its control which was the major part of Bakewell's contribution to improved animal husbandry. Unfortunately, Bakewell and his fellow animal improvers lacked an effective means of progeny testing; the hiring of tups was only a very imperfect method. Russell concluded that it seems likely Bakewell's selection policy was based entirely on appearance, 'choosing his stock by the traditional "feel" of the Midland grazier', and that the difference between the Dishley and rival breeds was in appearance and perhaps its superior growth rate. Russell is ready to acknowledge Bakewell's achievements 'for publicising the idea of selecting stock for economic performance', but questions 'whether his actual achievements in this field were of any great significance'. Arthur Young also considered the particular merits of the Dishley stock to be of small consequence compared with the principles that Bakewell disseminated.<sup>30</sup> Bakewell's achievements in livestock breeding are therefore questioned. His longhorn cattle have disappeared and his Dishley or New Leicester sheep no longer survive as a pure breed. Nevertheless his failures can be exaggerated. The New Leicester had a number of important attributes, in particular its propensity to early maturity. They have therefore become known internationally as a highly successful cross, particularly in Australia, where the Border Leicester is the most popular longwool breed,

<sup>29</sup> Pawson, *Bakewell*, p. 73; Robinson Library, Misc Mss 7, Robert Bakewell, Spilsby, to George Culley, 23 Jun. 1789; Bakewell to Culley, 18 Nov. 1789, printed in Pawson, *Bakewell*, pp. 145, 147; Hunt, *Agricultural memoirs*, pp. 51–4. For the records of the Society, see Notting-

ham University Library, Manuscripts Department, MS 9/1, 'Papers of the Dishley Sheep Society, Leicester 1790–98'; Marshall, *Rural economy*, I, p. 431

<sup>30</sup> Russell, *Like engend'ring like*, pp. 204, 213, 215, 219, 200; Young, *Observations*, p. 6.

but the New Leicesters are also the origin of the modern longwool in Britain.

The early details of Bakewell's career are still unclear, particularly the dating of his work, and little more is likely to be uncovered. Yet enough is known to suggest the importance for Bakewell of belonging to a family of successful improving farmers working with an already improved farm. Historians recognise the importance of family and religious networks in manufacturing and trade in this period, ascribing particular importance to those involving religious dissenters. It is clear this needs to be extended to Bakewell and his cousins and fellow Presbyterians, who together formed the main group of Midland livestock breeders. Although Bakewell still tends to dominate accounts of eighteenth-century animal improvement, the contribution of the other breeders who were closely associated with him should also be acknowledged. The high prices demanded by Bakewell were prohibitive for any but the largest breeders, and so 'none but tupmen can come to Dishley'. The rest had to be content with the more diluted Dishley blood provided by the rams of Paget, Culley and the other breeders associated with Bakewell. Bakewell was responsible for the development of the New Leicester, and for the publicity associated with it, but he depended upon other breeders for stock to work with, and upon improvers like Culley, the Bishop of Llandaff and Benjamin Codd to introduce his sheep into their localities. Bakewell was undoubtedly a highly successful publicist, but he was no charlatan, and his willingness to show his model farm to visitors and to encourage the adoption of new breeds greatly helped to publicise better farming techniques and the need for farmers to pay more attention to the principles of selective breeding. As George Culley observed to his brother in 1784:

Is it not amazing that this extraordinary genius should be able to electrify so many people with the same or nearly the same degree of enthusiasm, and as it were to draw them all to one locus or point, for in fact he has convinced the unbelievers of the truth of his sheepish doctrine. I was shown some letters from Lincolnshire where they candidly confess their *errors* and mistaken opinions.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> NRO, ZCU 9, George Culley to his brother Matthew, 24 Oct. 1784, 4 Nov 1784, pr. Orde (ed.), *Culley travel journals and letters*, pp. 188–90, 192–5.

# Malthus, marriage and poor law allowances revisited: a Bedfordshire case study, 1770–1834<sup>\*</sup>

by Samantha Williams

## *Abstract*

The debate on whether poor law allowance payments to the families of agricultural labourers ‘encouraged’ early marriage and large families is still far from resolved, partly because the exact geographical prevalence and timing of such allowances has not been adequately established. A case study of two communities in Bedfordshire provides evidence on the timing, duration, and value of such allowances, as well as detailed information of the family circumstances of labouring families. The study finds that allowances were largely restricted to periods of particular economic hardship and that they were a necessary response to increasing family size rather than a cause of such shifts in demographic behaviour.

The debate concerning the impact of poor law allowances on the fertility of agricultural labourers and the extent to which allowances helped promote the population growth of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is still far from resolved, although recent discussions have been relatively few. Contemporaries believed there was a strong link between the two. The Reverend Thomas Malthus was one of the strongest advocates of this viewpoint, putting his case in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* (first published in 1798 and revised frequently thereafter). He believed that parish allowances were one of the key mechanisms accounting for the rapid population growth of the later eighteenth century. He argued that relief by a scale which increased in value upon marriage and with the addition of each child was

a direct, constant, and systemical encouragement to marriage before removing from each individual that heavy responsibility which he would incur by the laws of nature for bringing human beings into the world which he could not support.

Such a mechanism would lead to a situation in which poor relief would, paradoxically, create more of the poor it was seeking to maintain. Malthus’s influence on contemporary debates was profound; it has been argued that Malthus formulated the terms of discourse on the subject of poverty for half a century.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> I would like to thank Richard M. Smith for all his advice with this paper. Financial support from the Wellcome Trust made this research possible.

<sup>1</sup> T. R. Malthus, *Essay on population* (London, 1798), p. 83; ninth edn (1888), p. 415; E. A. Wrigley, ‘Malthus on the prospects for the labouring poor’, *Historical J.*, 31 (1988), pp. 813–29.

Research by the Cambridge Group has established that during the 'long' eighteenth century the total population of England increased from 5.0 million in 1686 to 11.5 million in 1821, an increase of 133 per cent, and the intrinsic growth rate increased from zero to more than 1.6 per cent per annum. By the early decades of the nineteenth century population was growing faster than at any previous or subsequent period of English history. Wrigley hypothesised that 'either mortality fell very substantially or fertility increased sharply, or both changes occurred but on a more modest scale'. Wrigley attributes the lion's share of this rise to an increase in fertility rather than mortality improvement, and while more recent historiography has reasserted the importance of mortality, it would still appear that fertility played the more prominent role, via earlier and more universal marriage. The mean age at first marriage for women fell from 26.5 in 1650–99 to 23.4 in 1800–49. For first-time brides, those in the 20–4 age group became increasingly the most frequent and came to comprise almost half of all marriages 1775–1837. 'Marriage', contends Wrigley, 'was the hinge on which the demographic system turned'. Marrying three years younger would produce 1.2 extra children per marriage. With rapidly rising fertility, the proportion of children under 15 in the population increased from a low point of well under 30 per cent in the 1660s to 40 per cent in the 1820s; and it is reasonable to suppose that under such demographic conditions children would become a major burden on local ratepayers.

The Cambridge Group's analysis rests on data generated by two methods: registered demographic events in parish registers (baptisms, marriages, and burials) for 404 parishes and the family reconstitution of 26 parishes. This means that 'national' trends are calculated by averaging the results. The Group argue that the 26 reconstitution parishes are broadly representative of England as a whole in terms of occupational make-up, but due to the patchy survival of sources and the rigorous method of calculation, no urban centres are included. Regional studies such as that by Hudson and King for Sowerby and Calverley in West Yorkshire can reveal how far local communities converged or diverged from this national picture and the influence of occupation on demographic variables. There are not, unfortunately, many of these types of studies, and it is only through the completion of many more that a fuller understanding of population history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will become possible. Nevertheless, in Campton with Shefford and Southill (Bedfordshire), one of the Group's 26 reconstitutions which will be used for the analysis presented below, age at marriage did fall substantially throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This fall requires explanation and an assessment of the extent to which poor relief could have been a contributing factor.<sup>2</sup>

There is evidence that from the late eighteenth century, families were increasingly allocated

<sup>2</sup> E. A. Wrigley, R. S. Davies, J. E. Oeppen and R. S. Schofield, *English population history from family reconstitution, 1580–1837* (1997), chs 5 and 7, and in particular Tables 5.4, p. 141, and A9.1, pp. 614–15; E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The population history of England, 1541–1871: a reconstruction* (sec. edn, 1989), pp. 215–19, 228–36, 257–65, and Tables 7.15, p. 230, and A.3.1, pp. 528–9; E. A. Wrigley, 'The growth of population in eighteenth-century England: a conundrum resolved', *Past and Present* 98 (1983), pp. 121–50. On mortality see P. Razzell, 'The growth of population in eighteenth-century England: a critical reappraisal', *JEcH* 53 (1993), pp. 743–71. On the specific methodological problems associated with family reconstitution, see S. Ruggles, 'The limitations of English family reconstitution: English population history from family reconstitution, 1580–1837', *Continuity and Change* 14 (1999), pp. 105–30, and see the regional analysis of demographic trends by P. Hudson and S. King, 'Two textile townships, c. 1660–1820: a comparative demographic analysis', *ECHR* 53 (2000), pp. 706–41.

poor relief. Huzel has argued that, 'By any criteria, the 1790s must be viewed as a turning point, for it was in the critical middle years of this decade that poor relief underwent a major and, in some cases, radical transformation'. This transformation was the widespread adoption of parish schemes for the relief of able-bodied married labourers, in contrast to the period before the 1790s when the vast majority of parish recipients had been the impotent poor. Such schemes were a response to the harvest failures of that decade, the rapid price inflation of the Napoleonic War period, and the post-war agricultural depression, coupled with the demographic pressure of larger families, and an increasingly seasonal and insecure labour market. Parishes increasingly resorted to a wide range of schemes, including the provision of subsidised food; 'allowances-in-aid-of-wages', popularly known as 'Speenhamland' payments, which were payments to those men who were under- or unemployed, sometimes scaled according to the prevailing price of bread and/or the size of the labourer's family; 'child allowances', which could be flat payments according to the number of children in a labourer's family (commonly starting with the third or fourth child under 10 or 12), or as part of the 'Speenhamland' system; the 'roundsman system', whereby labourers without work rotated between the farmers in a parish and whose weekly income was paid in part from the farmers and topped up by the parish; the 'labour rate', under which local farmers chose to either pay the rate or employ labourers without sufficient work; the provision of work, usually on the roads; or the workhouse. These schemes were incredibly flexible and were on many occasions combined. While there is patchy evidence that payments to able-bodied men 'overburdened with large families' were not new to the 1790s, it is likely that the extent to which parishes gave allowances for large families was a new feature of the late eighteenth century. Likewise, it is probable that payments to 'top-up' the inadequate wages of labourers only became common after the high price years of the 1790s.<sup>3</sup>

The vast majority of research on the prevalence of parish allowance schemes and their impact on fertility and the local labour market relies on the *Select Committee on labourers' wages* of 1824 and the *Rural Queries* collected in 1832. Analyses of this evidence suggests that in 1824 almost 50 per cent of parishes reported that they were subsidizing wages out of the rates while by 1832 14 per cent were. Much more common were child allowances, with at least three-quarters of parishes responding that they gave this type of relief in 1824, but only 38 per cent of parishes in 1832. Boyer's calculations reveal that child allowances were particularly widespread in the grain-producing south-east, where more than 90 per cent of parishes used child allowances in 1824, declining to 80 per cent in 1832. There are substantial problems with these sources. The 1824 Return failed to indicate what proportion of the parishes per county responded to the questionnaire and their relative populations. It is therefore impossible to establish whether the replies constitute anything like a representative sample and makes any assessment of the extent of the allowance system difficult. The *Rural Queries* suffer from similar problems, since replies were returned for only 10 per cent of the 15,000 parishes in England and Wales, accounting for just 20 per cent of the population. The wording of the 1824 and 1832

<sup>3</sup> J. P. Huzel 'The labourer and the poor law, 1750-1850', in G. E. Mingay (ed.) *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, VI, 1750-1850 (1989), pp. 755-810, at p. 773. This chapter by Huzel provides the best overview of the debate. A review of the Speenhamland decisions and scales can be found in A. Aspinall and E. A. Smith (eds), *English historical documents, 1783-1832* (1969), pp. 414-15.

questionnaires are also problematic. The 1824 Select Committee asked: 'Do any labourers in your district employed by the farmers receive either the whole or any part of the wages of their labour out of the poor rates?' The use of the word 'any' allowed an area to answer positively while making only negligible or sporadic use of these supplements, and this could account for the extremely high level of parishes reporting the allocation of child allowances. The 1832 *Rural Queries* asked parishes whether they paid child allowances, whether they gave any outdoor relief or wages out of the rates to employed able-bodied labourers, and whether these allowances were paid according to a scale. It seems likely that by asking questions about different forms of poor relief in so quick succession, parish officers gave answers confusing the schemes. In fact only 910 parishes answered the question relevant to child allowances. Furthermore, Blaug does not assess whether the parishes giving answers in 1824 and 1832 were the same parishes or types of parish.<sup>4</sup>

More crucial, however, is the fact that reliance on this evidence has limited much of the discussion to the decade immediately preceding the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. Relatively little is known about allowances from their more widespread adoption in the late eighteenth century until these reports, or about allowance schemes between 1824 and 1832. If we hope to assess the impact of allowances upon fertility, it is crucial that we establish the extent to which parishes resorted to these schemes in the same time period as fertility soared and age at marriage fell: that is, after 1750. While it is argued by those historians relying upon official reports that allowance schemes were widespread in the 1820s and 1830s, much of the largely sporadic local evidence of allowances in the second half of the eighteenth century and up to the 1820s suggests that allowance schemes were largely temporary expedients in response to high prices, extremely localized at the parish level, and abandoned after the crisis had passed. These studies will be reviewed later in the article and their findings will be compared to those of Campton and Shefford. If indeed flexibility at the level of the parish is the key to child allowances and Speenhamland payments, then it seems it might prove difficult to establish the exact prevalence and timing of allowances on any widespread scale. As Poynter has asserted, the crucial question is how often allowances were 'a mere temporary expedient,

<sup>4</sup> Amongst the historians relying upon this data are M. Blaug, 'The myth of the old poor law and the making of the new', in M. W. Flinn and T. C. Smout (eds), *Essays in social history* (1974), pp. 123–53, at pp. 129–30; id., 'The Poor Law Report re-examined', *JEC* 24 (1964), pp. 229–45, at pp. 234–5; J. P. Huzel, 'Malthus, the poor law, and population in early nineteenth-century England', *EcHR* 23 (1969), pp. 430–51, id., 'The demographic impact of the old poor law: more reflections on Malthus', *EcHR* 33 (1980), pp. 367–81; id., 'Parson Malthus and the Pelican Inn protocol: a reply to Professor Levine', *Historical Methods* 17 (1984), pp. 25–7; G. Boyer, *An economic history of the English poor law, 1750–1850* (1990). Other historians who have contributed to this debate are D. A. Baugh, 'The cost of poor relief in south-east England, 1790–1834', *EcHR* 28 (1975), pp. 50–68; D. Levine, 'Parson Malthus, Professor Huzel, and the Pelican Inn protocol: a comment', *Historical Methods* 17 (1984), pp. 21–4; J. A. Goldstone, 'The demographic revolution in England: a re-examination', *Population Stud.*, 49 (1986), pp. 5–33; M. Neuman, 'Speenhamland in Berkshire', in E. A. Martin (ed.), *Comparative development in social welfare* (1972), pp. 85–127; id., *The Speenhamland county: poverty and the poor laws in Berkshire, 1782–1834* (1982). The figures cited here for 1824 and 1832 are from Blaug, 'Myth', pp. 129–30; Blaug, 'Re-examined', p. 241; Boyer, *Economic history*, p. 153. The problems with these sources are discussed by Blaug, 'Re-examined', pp. 231–2, 234, and N. Verdon, 'The rural labour market in the early nineteenth century: women's and children's employment, family income, and the 1834 Poor Law Report', *EcHR* 55 (2002), pp. 299–323, at pp. 302–3.

abandoned after the emergency, and how much it became the normal method of maintaining labourers'.<sup>5</sup>

Those historians relying upon the government reports of 1824 and 1832, the most prominent of whom are James Huzel and George Boyer, have sought not only to establish the prevalence of allowances but also to test the relationship between poor relief and population growth. Both Huzel and Boyer have examined the impact of parish allowances on birth rates at the parish level, and drawn opposing conclusions from their results. Huzel argued in 1980 that parish allowance schemes were implemented in the 1820s following a period of high birth rates and concluded that:

The evidence suggests that the Malthusian proposition should, if anything, be turned on its head. It is much more plausible to contend that the allowance system, far from acting as a crucial catalyst to population increase, was a response to it.

Huzel's evidence was sufficiently persuasive to lead Joel Mokyr to comment in 1985 that 'the demographic argument against [the Poor Law] has been effectively demolished', but it obviously did not sway Roger Schofield, who, in the same year speculated that 'the fall in the age at marriage may ... have owed much to social attitudes that ... allocated welfare preferentially to married males as heads of families'. The most recent contribution to the debate came from Boyer in 1990. It has already been noted that Boyer estimates that up to 90 per cent of rural parishes in the south-east gave child allowances in the early 1820s. He contends that allowances which were scaled by the number of children in a family would have provided a strong incentive for marriage and parenthood. Such allowances could increase a labourer's annual income by around 14 per cent for each child granted an allowance, which would be a total of 85 per cent of his annual income if he had three children. Boyer claims to have established a strong correlation between parishes which allocated child allowances at the third child in the 1820s and 1830s and higher birth rates, calculating that parishes that began allowances at three children experienced birth rates 25 per cent greater than those parishes without allowances.

Proving the direction of causation is always problematic, but Boyer claims that the provision of allowances caused higher birth rates, and he concludes that 'the payment of child allowances did indeed cause an increase in birth rates. Malthus was right'. It is equally plausible that allowances were a necessary response to the poverty faced by large families in the early nineteenth century. Boyer assumes a high degree of voluntary control over childbearing in labouring families, an assumption which contradicts Malthus' view and modern demographic research that it was the age at marriage which was the crucial factor governing fertility rather than changes in marital fertility. If instead we take Boyer's findings to mean that in parishes where child allowances started at three children, couples decided to marry earlier, it would

<sup>5</sup> J. R. Poynter, *Society and pauperism. English ideas on poor relief, 1795-1834* (1969), p. 83. A detailed assessment of the debate so far concerning the influence of the Poor Law on fertility and age at marriage, and the severe limitations of the Parliamentary Papers, will be provided in Samantha Williams, 'Poor law practice and fertility change in England, 1700-1834: a review' (forthcoming).

imply that couples would have had to wait at least five years before they became eligible for such schemes.<sup>6</sup>

The fundamental flaw in previous research is that little is known about the family circumstances of the *actual recipients* of parish allowances. This methodological problem is fully realised by Huzel, who has suggested that in order to assess the impact of poor relief on fertility fully, the ideal methodology would combine parish registers and detailed poor law records, thereby allowing for family reconstitution of those actually in receipt of poor relief. This article presents the results of just such an exercise. The parish was the unit where the giving and withholding of allowances was a daily, concrete, business. The research covers the period from 1770 to 1834 and thereby illuminates the under-researched period from the 1790s to the 1820s. The technique of nominal record linkage between poor law sources and parish registers for the communities of Campton and Shefford in Bedfordshire allows us to know, for the first time, the demographic characteristics of recipients of poor relief. Such a methodology reveals the proportion of labourers' families in receipt of allowances, the sums such households received, the exact timing and duration of allowance payments, and the size of their families at the point of receiving relief and afterwards. This research thereby throws new light on the impact of family allowance payments on the marriage decisions of the labouring poor. At the centre of the discussion is the extent to which allowances encouraged, or were a necessary response to, population growth.<sup>7</sup>

## I

Campton and Shefford lie nine miles south-east of Bedford, in Bedfordshire, a corn-growing county in the south Midlands. Campton was an average-sized agricultural parish, while Shefford was the neighbouring small market town with a more diverse occupational structure. Common land in these communities was enclosed in 1798. From the first census in 1801 to the 1841 census, population in Bedfordshire increased in line with national totals at roughly 79 per cent; the rate was slightly higher in Shefford at 87 per cent, from 474 to 889, while the population of Campton increased less, at 58 per cent, from 316 to 501. By 1841 the populations of Campton and Shefford had, like the wider population, become particularly youthful: in Campton 38 per cent of inhabitants were aged under 15 and in Shefford the figure was 36 per cent. In terms of occupational structure, the censuses reveal that an increasing proportion of Campton's inhabitants were employed in agriculture, from a figure of 62 per cent of families in 1811 to over 80 per cent in 1831, while the number employed in trade, manufacture and handicrafts fell from 35 per cent of families to between 10 and 15 per cent. By 1841 two-thirds of men listed as occupied in the census were employed as labourers and 14.5 per cent in manufacturing occupations. In Shefford by contrast, the majority of families (61 per cent in 1811) were employed in trade, manufacture and handicrafts. By the following decade this figure had risen

<sup>6</sup> Quotes from Huzel, 'Demographic impact', p. 380; J. Mokyr, 'The industrial revolution and the new economic history', in J. Mokyr (ed.), *The economics of the industrial revolution* (1985), p. 11; R. S. Schofield, 'English

marriage patterns revisited', *J. Family History* 10 (1985), pp. 18–19; Boyer, *Economic history*, p. 150.

<sup>7</sup> Huzel, 'Parson Malthus', p. 27.

to 85 per cent, but by 1831 the proportion of families employed in this way had fallen to 40 per cent, while 51 per cent were now employed in the elusive 'other' category. The proportion of families employed in agriculture shrank from 35 per cent in 1811 to nine per cent in 1831. By 1841 38.1 per cent of men were returned as employed in manufacture and 12.6 per cent in distribution and trade, but a substantial section of the male labour force (22.2 per cent) were agricultural labourers. The trade was chiefly in corn, timber, coal and iron, which were transmitted by river to and from King's Lynn. Three times a year cattle fairs were held in the town. The lace and straw trades became significant employers of women and children in the county towards the end of the century, with lace-making predominant in the north and greater recourse to straw-plaiting in the south. By the early nineteenth century in the parishes outside the northern region of the county, lace-making had given way to straw-plaiting under the inducement of higher earnings. In 1801 Arthur Young had observed lace-making in Shefford, but by 1808 Thomas Batchelor noted that the expansion of the plaiting district in Bedfordshire had 'spread rapidly' over the southern, central and eastern district 'as far as Woburn, Amptill, and Shefford'. Central markets for straw plait were at Luton and Dunstable, in the south of the country, but Shefford also provided a local market for plaiters and dealers. By 1841, 54 per cent of women recording an occupation in Campton were classified as straw-plaiters and 28 per cent in Shefford. The market town offered more opportunities for domestic service than Campton, with 23 per cent of women recorded as female servants.<sup>8</sup>

Before proceeding, the representativeness of Campton and Shefford needs to be addressed. As a rural parish dominated by agriculture, Campton could be taken as a proxy for other agricultural parishes in the south and east of England. The presence of the lace-making and straw-plaiting trades, which provided employment for women and children throughout the period investigated here, would have mitigated the worst aspects of male agricultural labourer under-employment. Other regions in the south and east of England were experiencing the collapse of rural industry, in particular spinning, while opportunities in lace-making and straw-plaiting, although in decline after 1815, still provided employment for substantial numbers of women and children in Bedfordshire. In the 1830s it has been estimated that the earnings of women and especially children made substantial contributions to the family economy and it was child wages that had the major impact in offsetting the low earnings of men. This does not, however, rule out Bedfordshire as unrepresentative. This was one of the counties in which contemporaries (and many historians) believed parish allowances to have been widespread. Bedfordshire was identified by the 1824 select committee as one of the six counties most addicted to the allowance system and allowances were mentioned in the parliamentary reports

<sup>8</sup> The average population per parish in 1831 for English agricultural counties was 534 and the median was 394. See P. Laslett, *The world we have lost – further explored* (1983), pp. 53–5, 304. Enclosure in Campton and Shefford is discussed by A. Young, 'Minutes concerning parliamentary enclosures in the county of Bedford', *Annals of Agriculture*, 42 (1804), p. 27. The populations and occupational distribution of Campton and Shefford are taken from the abstracts of census returns, 1801–1841. For the national totals see Wrigley and Schofield, *Population history*, App. 6, Table A6.7, total (1). The age structure of Campton and Shefford in 1841 is given in S. K. Williams, 'Poor relief, welfare and medical provision in Bedfordshire: the social, economic and demographic context, c. 1770–1834', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1998), ch. 2 and specifically Tables 2.4 and 2.5, p. 62. 37–28 per cent of females recorded an occupation in the census. On lace-making and straw-plaiting in the country, see N. Verdon, *Rural women workers in nineteenth-century England: gender, work and wages* (2002), chs 1 and 5.

for 1824, 1827, 1830, and 1832. Bedfordshire was one of Mark Blaug's now infamous hard core of 'Speenhamland counties' in 1824 and 1832. In the final years of the Old Poor Law the county had one of the highest levels of per capita poor expenditure of any county in England and Wales, at 16s. 4d. per head of population in 1834. Bedfordshire, along with the six other counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Cornwall, and Cumberland were all cited by the Poor Law Report of 1834 as typical of the country as a whole: 'We believe, in short, that a fairer average of the whole country cannot be taken'. It is clear that Bedfordshire is an appropriate county upon which to test Malthus's thesis, but we might need to qualify the result as more typical of south Midland counties with the presence of lace-making and straw-plating: Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, and Northamptonshire. Shefford provides a useful point of contrast to Campton and highlights urban-rural differences in parish administration. Again, south Midland counties were smattered with small market towns.<sup>9</sup>

The primary source for the research presented here is overseers' account books for Campton (1767–1834) and Shefford (1794–1828), which give lists of sums spent weekly on the poor, the name of the pauper, the amount given, and frequently the reason for the payment. These account books have been nominally linked to the existing family reconstitution for the two communities. Reconstitutions link together the baptisms, marriages and burials recorded in the Anglican parish registers for families and across generations. The methodology of linking poor law accounts with family reconstitutions is extremely time-consuming but ultimately rewarding since it permits the reconstitution of paupers' families. In Shefford over 70 per cent of families could be linked to the family reconstitution, while in Campton the figure was even higher, at over 90 per cent. In the cases of those families who could not be linked, it was sometimes possible to glean further information on the size of the family from the entries in the overseers' accounts. For the purposes of this article, the poor law histories – or 'pauper biographies' – of families have been analysed. When we consult the parish accounts we find lists of men in receipt of poor relief, but it is only when this information is linked to the reconstitution that we know whether an individual was married with children, and in this manner it is possible to identify the majority of families in receipt of poor relief of some kind. Methodological problems still remain. It is difficult to distinguish between the different types of parish allowance schemes in both communities. Child allowances are only clearly identifiable in Campton between January and December 1800 and at no point is specific mention made of Speenhamland scales of relief in either parish. Allowances-in-aid-of-wages are made in both parishes in the period after 1815 in the form of payments to the unemployed and under-employed, but it is not known if these payments were linked to a scale which aimed for a minimum income for a family or whether they were merely intended to top up earned wages

<sup>9</sup> Sokoll charts the immiserating impact of the collapse of wool spinning in Essex in T. Sokoll, *Household and family among the poor. The case of two Essex communities in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries* (1993). On women's and children's contribution to the family economy in Bedfordshire and other south Midland counties with rural industry, see Verdon, 'Rural labour market'. For Bedfordshire in official reports, see P. Grey, 'The pauper problem in Bedfordshire from 1795–1834', (unpublished M.Phil dissertation, University of Leicester, 1975). Blaug, 'Myth'; id., 'Re-examined'. The Commissioners' view of Bedfordshire as average is cited in Blaug, 'Re-examined', pp. 232–3. Poor relief per capita from W. Apfel and P. Dunkley, 'English rural society and the New Poor Law: Bedfordshire 1834–47', *Social Hist.*, 10 (1985), pp. 37–68, Table 1, p. 40.

to prevailing rates. This suggests that the types of allowance schemes identified in the secondary literature might actually be artificial and that historians' definitions have been imposed on a situation which was seen in less precise terms by local poor law administrators. As we shall see below, poor relief to families in these case-study communities was highly flexible, and supports other evidence of the sporadic nature of poor relief payments to families, rather than the more established viewpoint of the widespread prevalence of allowance schemes in the south and east. The evidence from Bedfordshire is similar to that found by Mark Neuman in his study of 16 Berkshire parishes. Neuman concludes that it is usually assumed that Speenhamland payments were 'ordered, universal and persistent', but he found that allowances were in fact often sporadic and locally diverse.<sup>10</sup>

## II

At the turn of the century, magistrates in Bedfordshire recognized that cash payments to able-bodied men had increased rapidly since the late eighteenth century. At their meeting in 1801, county magistrates had rejected a specific scale because it was considered to be lacking in flexibility, but they recommended that the county's overseers 'afford such extraordinary relief to all their labouring poor in proportion to the size of their families and other circumstances as may be adequate to their necessities during the continuance of the present pressure'. A few years earlier, in the particularly high price year of 1795, Quarter Sessions had ordered that all bread had to be standard wheaten bread; in 1801 this order to bakers was re-issued, and it was recommended that some of the allowance was to be made up in kind and that substitutes for bread corn were to be provided at moderate prices. If overseers did not adopt the recommendations, magistrates were recommended to hear complaints of the poor. In Ampthill in 1797 parish officials had agreed to have monthly meetings to fix the level of allowances. The hundred of Clifton, which contained Campton and Shefford, reported that food substitutes were

<sup>10</sup> Poor law account books for Campton and Shefford are found in Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service, Bedford (hereafter BLARS), P18/12/1-2, X514/1-3, P70/12/1-2. Transcription of Campton's and Shefford's overseers' accounts into a MS Access database resulted in over 80,000 records. The family reconstitution for Campton-with-Shefford and Southill is held at the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, University of Cambridge. Shefford was a chapelry in the parish of Campton at this time, but since the two places were separate for the purposes of poor law and church administration, it is appropriate to view the two places as separate communities. In the family reconstitution, Southill – a contiguous parish – was also reconstituted along with Campton and Shefford. The overseers' accounts for Southill survive, but do not always name paupers, thereby making it impossible to construct the detailed pauper histories assembled for Campton and Shefford. On reconstitution methodology, see E. A. Wrigley, 'Family reconstitution', in E. A. Wrigley (ed.), *An introduction to English historical demography* (1966), pp. 96-159. Higher linkage rates for an agricultural parish (Campton) compared to a bustling market town (Shefford) are to be expected, since we would anticipate a higher turnover of population in the latter. Those who were linked were more likely to have stayed in the parish long enough to record events in the parish register. This was especially true for families, who were receiving relief because they were in the process of having children, and baptisms for these children were recorded in the relevant parish register. For further details on linking poor law sources with family reconstitutions, see S. R. Ottaway and S. K. Williams, 'Life course and life-cycle: reconstructing the experience of poverty in the time of the Old Poor Law', *Archives* 23 (1998), pp. 19-29. Neuman, 'Speenhamland in Berkshire', pp. 99, 101-9.

generally used, and some parishes distributed flour and herrings to labouring families at reduced prices.<sup>11</sup>

In 1818 a magistrate acknowledged before a House of Lords committee that the granting of allowances had become very common in Bedfordshire.<sup>12</sup> The same general picture is apparent from the evidence collected for the 1832 *Rural Queries*, relied upon so heavily by many historians. At least 10 out of 16 parishes responding to the questionnaire gave allowances on account of children, commencing with the third or fourth child under 10. It is not clear how representative these parishes might be since they only accounted for 12 per cent of parishes in the county. The proportion of families in receipt of child allowances varied enormously: in Willington only one man, with a very large family, received an allowance; in Cople only four families out of 136 were allocated relief; in Kempston 53 families were in receipt of allowances from a possible 348 families; and in Westoning almost all labourers received allowances for their families. In Redbornstoke hundred, all of the 14 parishes were to some degree operating allowances for single men as well as those with a family. On average 14 per cent of families in each parish were dependent on relief, but there was a staggering variety parish by parish, the figure varying between 14 and 60 per cent. Child allowances in Liddington were flexible and were frequently adjusted according to the cost of living: 'Of late, relief is given only if there be four children; formerly money was often allowed for the third child, and in dearer times I believe for the second child'. Again, the evidence suggests that considerable flexibility was the hallmark of the allowance systems in many parishes. Similarly, while allowances for families in Bedfordshire were mentioned in the early nineteenth-century parliamentary reports, payments varied with economic conditions and from parish to parish.<sup>13</sup>

Although this evidence points to the use of allowances in many Bedfordshire parishes, it is still too sparse for us to make an estimation of the prevalence of allowance in the county between 1790 and 1834. There were 141 rural parishes in the county and it is evident that we know little of the day-to-day parish administration of all of these places over this long time span. Where we do have detailed evidence of this type is our case study communities of Campton and Shefford and it is to the results of this detailed reconstitution of pauper's families that this article will now turn.

### III

The data presented here relates to all long-term poor relief payments to families. 'Families' are defined as married couples with children aged 14 and under. It has been assumed that children over the age of 14 were independent from their parents, working away from home as servants or apprentices, or living in lodgings. Although we do not know the age at which children

<sup>11</sup> BLARS, QSM 19, p. 135; 21, pp. 15–16, 35–6, P30/8/11; F. G. Emmison, 'The relief of the poor at Eaton Socon', *Bedfordshire Historical Record Soc.* 15 (1933), chs 31–4.

<sup>12</sup> BPP, 1818, V, Evidence of the Rev. Hugh Wade Geary in 'Report of Lord's committee on the Poor Laws', 1817, printed in *Report of the Select Committee on the Poor Laws* (1818), p. 73 (separately paginated).

<sup>13</sup> P.P. 1834, XXX, *Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the poor laws*, App. (B.1), 'Answers to rural queries in five parts', part 1, qq. 24 and 25 [hereafter *Rural Queries*]. The government reports are discussed by Grey, 'Pauper problem'.

typically flew the nest in these communities, since there are no local censuses for Campton and Shefford, Wall has estimated that around 60 per cent of children left home between the ages of 15 and 19. Families were eligible for both long-term relief, called 'pensions' by parish overseers, and occasional relief in cash and kind. Casual forms of benefits included cash in times of temporary illness, food and drink, fuel, clothing, help with paying the rent, with the costs of childbirth, christenings and funerals, the apprenticeship of children, the provision of nursing and medical care, the topping up of benefits from friendly societies, and even exemption from liability for the poor rate. A poor house provided accommodation for a few of the poor in Shefford, usually the transient. Pensions have been defined here as regular weekly payments for at least six months, and such payments accounted for at least two-thirds of parish spending on the poor. This contrasts with King's findings for six parishes in the south and east where, as a proportion of parish spending on the poor, pensions increased over the eighteenth century to almost two-thirds by the 1770s but thereafter fell to around 40 per cent in the 1820s. Since both contemporaries and historians have assumed that allowances in some form were widely available throughout most of the post-1790 period, it is necessary to assess the extent to which families received these long-term pension payments from the parish. From the pauper biographies of 'family-pensioners' it is possible to establish exactly who was in receipt of a pension and their family circumstances. In order to assess the 'attractiveness' of parish pensions to families, this section considers the timing, duration, and value of relief to family-pensioners in the two communities.<sup>14</sup>

There is a great deal of evidence in the secondary literature that relief lists grew increasingly male and younger from the late eighteenth century. It has been claimed by Dunkley and Boyer that it was the under-employed male, and men overburdened with large families in particular, who came to dominate the relief lists after 1790. In Berkshire, for instance, the number of families in receipt of some sort of poor relief increased more than three-fold between 1764 and 1801. Other research has confirmed this picture. King has shown that the recipient lists in 14 rural south and eastern parishes moved from being heavily skewed towards women in the 1760s (only 30 per cent male) to being heavily skewed towards men in the early nineteenth century (just over 60 per cent male), although the decline in the numbers of women pensioners was far less dramatic and more women were again relieved regularly by the 1820s. It is clear that men took an increasing share of pension payments. Age-specific information from four parishes reveals that between the 1780 and 1815 relief was increasingly allocated to the young, although elderly men were reclaiming their place as recipients after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. King is not able, however, to establish that this increase in payments to those under 50 took the form of 'Speenhamland' type schemes which paid male heads of families. Ottaway's research on the elderly stops at 1800, but she has shown for Terling (Essex) and Puddletown (Dorset) that although there were increasing numbers of adults under 60 coming on to poor relief, the proportion of parish spending given to the elderly remained high at between one-quarter and

<sup>14</sup> Wall estimates that for every hundred offspring aged 10–14, resident with their parents, there might be fewer than 40 still present aged 15–19. R. Wall, 'Leaving home and the process of household formation in pre-industrial England', *Continuity and Change* 2 (1987), pp. 77–101, at p. 91. S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England, 1700–1850: a regional perspective* (2000), pp. 155–6.

40 per cent. It seems likely from these studies that families were increasingly allocated occasional relief but that the elderly were not marginalised from the relief lists.<sup>15</sup>

Over the entire period for which there are overseers' accounts for the two Bedfordshire communities, there were only 24 clear cases of pensions to families in Campton (1767–1834) and 21 in Shefford (1794–1828). As a proportion of all pensioners per decade, in Campton families made up 11 per cent in the 1760s and 1770s, none in the 1780s, and then rose to 29 per cent in the 1790s and 26 per cent in the 1800s, thereafter falling to 23 per cent, 15 per cent and 7 per cent in the 1810s, 1820s, and 1830s respectively. In Shefford the proportion was always much lower, with families accounting for 17 per cent of pensioners in the 1790s, rising to 31 per cent in the 1800s, falling to 15 per cent in the 1810s and rising slightly to 21 per cent in the 1820s. This somewhat distorts the picture, however, since families largely came onto poor relief at specific times. In Campton payments to families were largely restricted to the 'crisis' periods at the turn of the century and following the end of the Napoleonic Wars. In Shefford, there was a similar, although less pronounced, concentration of family-pensioners around 1800, but there was no clustering following Waterloo; rather, it was in the 1820s that most families came to require relief. In Campton and Shefford, it was lone women, as single women, unmarried mothers, widows with children, and especially elderly widows rather than families who dominated the relief lists throughout the period. In Campton lone women made up between just over half and three-quarters of pensioners until the 1790s, when their proportion fell to 43–58 per cent (but still the largest group) in the period 1790–1820, and thereafter rose again to 50 per cent. In Shefford, by contrast, lone women always made up a greater proportion of pensioners at between 50 and 62 per cent between 1790 and 1830. In a recent study of the north Lincolnshire parish of Broughton, lone women dominated the lists of pensioners. In terms of the proportion of parish spending, families were always allocated far less than lone women in these two Bedfordshire communities. In Campton, less than six per cent of all spending on the poor was allocated to family-pensioners before the 1790s, but this increased to 11 per cent in the 1790s, 15–24 per cent in the 1800s, 1810s and 1820s, before falling back to just three per cent in the 1830s. Of all the expenditure on out relief in the Essex parish of Ardleigh in 1796–7, child allowances accounted for just eight per cent. In Shefford not only were fewer families relieved, but they were allocated less in terms of pensions and occasional relief in cash and kind, receiving 12–20 per cent of these payments between the 1790s and 1820s. Again, lone women in both communities were given the bulk of money and relief in kind, with at least three-quarters of this spending going to them in Campton, and 69–71 per cent in Shefford, except for the 1820s then their share fell to just 30 per cent. It is likely that some of this increase in relief to

<sup>15</sup> P. Dunkley, *The crisis of the old poor law in England, 1795–1834: an interpretive essay* (1982); Boyer, *Economic history*. Other studies which reveal an increasingly male recipient list are R. M. Smith, 'Ageing and well-being in early modern England: pensions trends and gender preferences under the English old poor law, 1650–1800', in P. Johnson and P. Thane (eds), *Old Age from antiquity to post-modernity* (1998), pp. 64–95; P. Slack, *The English poor law, 1531–1782* (1990), pp. 54–5; B. Stapleton, 'Inherited poverty and life-cycle poverty: Odiham, Hampshire, 1650–1850', *Social Hist.*, 18 (1993), pp. 339–55; S. W. Taylor, 'Aspects of the socio-demographic history of seven Berkshire parishes in the eighteenth century' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Reading, 1987), p. 405; King, *Poverty and welfare*, ch. 6; S. R. Ottaway, 'Providing for the elderly in eighteenth-century England', *Continuity and Change* 13 (1998), pp. 391–418.

families in Shefford during the 1820s was due to chronic under-employment, with some of the male household heads being old, despite still having some children at home. This will be discussed further below.<sup>16</sup>

It is possible to calculate the proportion of families these pensioners constituted from the numbers of families given in the censuses of 1801–1831. In the decade 1801–1810 a large proportion of Campton's families were in receipt of pensions, at up to 28 per cent. After that date far fewer families received parish support, however, and the proportions fell to between 14 and 17.5 per cent between 1811 and 1820, and to around 10 per cent between 1821 and 1830. In Shefford, a much smaller percentage of the town's families received pensions: between 6 and 11 per cent between 1801 and 1810, 4.5 to 5.5 per cent between 1811 and 1820, and 5 to 6 per cent between 1821 and 1830. It seems likely that fewer families received allowances in the market town since agricultural labourers were a small, and contracting, group. This is hardly the flood of families relying upon the poor law which has been described by other historians, most notably Blaug and Boyer.<sup>17</sup>

Tables 1 and 2 lists all the family-pensioners in receipt of parish pensions over the period. Before the 1790s in Campton, only two families received a pension: John and Sarah Waller and their one-year-old daughter, who received a pension from October 1768 for seven months, until the deaths of Sarah and their daughter; and Thomas and Ann Hayes and their five children, who had a pension from 1777 until Thomas died in 1780, after which the parish paid Ann a widow's pension. In the 1790s, pensions began for William and Lucy Newman (1792–1798) and Charles and Ursula Bland (1798–1811, 1816, 1821). Before the crisis years of the turn of the century, therefore, only four families received parish pensions over the whole of the 31-year period 1767–1798. In Shefford, the overseers' accounts do not begin until 1794, and so we cannot establish the number of family-pensioners in the decades before the 1790s. Nonetheless, from the start of Shefford's accounts in 1794 and until the crisis years 1800–02, only two families, those of James Chapman (1795–1802) and Robert and Mary Savage (1794–1805) received a parish pension.<sup>18</sup>

Harvest failures and wartime inflation caused many families to seek relief from the poor law authorities at the turn of the century. In Campton between April 1799 and April 1800 11 new families received parish pensions which conform to 'classic child allowances' in that they were paid on a scale according to the number of children in a family and adjusted every few months in line with volatile prices. Table 3 gives the duration of these allowances in Campton. The highest price year at the turn of the century in Feinstein's cost of living index is 1800, but it would appear that local prices in Campton were higher in 1801: child allowance sums peaked in that year, as well as in terms of overall spending on all of the poor. Allowances started at the

<sup>16</sup> The handful of militia men's families have been excluded from these figures. R. Dyson, 'The experience of poverty in a rural community: Broughton, north Lincolnshire, 1760–1835', *Local Population Stud.*, 70 (2003), pp. 11–28; R. Wall, 'Families in crisis and the English poor law as exemplified by the relief programme in the Essex parish of Ardleigh, 1795–7', in Ochiai Emiko (ed.), *The logic of female succession: rethinking patriarchy and patrilineality in global and historical perspective*

(International Research Centre for Japanese Studies, international symposium 19, 2002), pp. 101–27, at p. 108.

<sup>17</sup> Numbers of recipients were calculated as a proportion of the census populations taken from the abstract of census returns, 1801–1831.

<sup>18</sup> Although there are no burials recorded for Robert and Mary Savage, their children are referred to in the overseers' accounts as if they were orphans.

TABLE 1. Family-Pensioners in Campton, 1767–1834

| <i>Name</i>                | <i>Dates</i>         | <i>Husband's age at marriage</i> | <i>Wife's age at marriage</i> | <i>Description c. 1800</i> | <i>Number of children</i> | <i>Ages of children</i>                | <i>Completed family size<sup>a</sup></i> |
|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| John & Sarah Waller        | 1768–1769            | –                                | –                             |                            | 1                         | 1                                      | 2                                        |
| Thomas & Ann Hayes         | 1777–1780            | 19                               | 28                            |                            | 5                         | 7, 6, 4, 2 baby born                   | 6                                        |
| William & Lucy Newman      | 1794–1798            | –                                | –                             |                            | 2                         | 14, 11                                 | 8                                        |
| Charles & Ursula Bland     | 1798–1812            | –                                | –                             | 'family'                   | –                         |                                        | 3 <sup>b</sup>                           |
| John & Kitty Devereux      | c. 1800<br>1805      | 18                               | 17                            | '2 children'               | 2                         | 4, 14m                                 | 9                                        |
| Joseph & Ann Whittemore    | c. 1800<br>1817–1822 | 32                               | 18                            | '4 children'               | 4                         | 9, 7, 4, 1                             | 13                                       |
| Thomas & Elizabeth Knight  | c. 1800<br>1816–1819 | 23                               | 25                            | '4 children'               | 3                         | 13, 12, 9, 7, 5, 3, 5m                 | 5                                        |
| James & Mary Gregory       | c. 1800              | 24                               | –                             | 'children'                 | 2                         | 13, 12, 9                              | 5                                        |
| Cornelius & Jemima Johnson | c. 1800              | –                                | 36                            | 'boy'                      | 2                         | 1, baby born                           | 5                                        |
| James & Phoebe Austin      | c. 1800              | –                                | –                             | 'children'                 | 4                         | 13, 11, 5, 2                           | 10                                       |
| William & Elizabeth Newman | c. 1800<br>1804      | 22                               | 19                            | '4 children'               | 8                         | 13, twins 9, 6                         | 6                                        |
| James & Mary Ingram        | c. 1800<br>1816–1818 | 31                               | 18                            | '2 children'               | 7                         | 13, 11, 9, 7, 5, 3, two babies born    | 10                                       |
| John & Ann Halfhead        | c. 1800              | –                                | –                             | '4 children'               | 5                         | 14, 11, 9, 7, 4, 3, baby born          | 8                                        |
| Henry & Mary Clarke        | c. 1800<br>1805–1806 | –                                | –                             | '3 children'               | 2                         | 13, 10, 8, 6, baby born                | 7                                        |
| Jonathan & Mary Jordan     | c. 1800<br>1810–1826 | 27                               | –                             | 'son Frank'                | 3                         | 13, 10                                 | 10                                       |
| Thomas Stevens             | 1816–1817            | –                                | –                             |                            | 5                         | 14, 12, 9, 7, 5, 3, baby born          | 7                                        |
| William & Mary Smith       | 1817                 | 15                               | 17                            |                            | 6                         | 4, 2                                   | 11                                       |
| John & Nelly Hathfield     | 1828–1831            | –                                | –                             | '4 children'               | –                         | [Frank] 9, 7, 4                        | 3 <sup>b</sup>                           |
| James & Elizabeth Newman   | 1817–1821            | 21                               | 24                            | 'family'                   | 7                         | 12, 10, 7, 4, 1                        | 5                                        |
| John & Mary Lennard        | 1826–1827            | –                                | –                             |                            | 6                         | 13, 10, 8, 6, 3, 9m                    | 12                                       |
| James & Sarah Devonshire   | 1821–1832            | 30                               | 22                            | 'boy' James                | 1                         | 5, 1                                   | 4                                        |
| William & Hannah Devereux  | 1828–1830            | 21                               | 16                            |                            | 3                         | 6, 4, 2, baby born                     | 6                                        |
| Joseph & Mary Stevens      | 1828–1830            | 32                               | 23                            |                            | 7                         | 13, 11, 8, 5, 2, baby born             | 12                                       |
| James & Harriet Devereux   | 1833                 | 21                               | 17                            |                            | 5                         | 9, 7, 5, 3, 1, 2 babies born           | 10                                       |
|                            |                      |                                  |                               |                            | 2                         | [James] 14, 12, 10, 8, 6, 5, baby born | 4                                        |

Source: BLARS, P18/12/1–2; X514/1–3; Campton, Shefford and Southill reconstruction.

Notes: <sup>a</sup> these figures are for families who have been successfully linked to the family reconstitution and include parents and all living children (excluding children who die, even after the end of the period here), except for those marked <sup>b</sup>, who are families who could not be linked to the family reconstitution and are described in the over-seers' accounts as 'family', 'wife', 'son', 'girl', 'daughter', 'child(ren)', and so these figures represent a minimum number of family members.

TABLE 2. Family-Pensioners in Shefford, 1794–1828

| Name                              | Dates        | Husband's age<br>at marriage | Wife's age<br>at marriage | Number<br>of children | Ages of children | Completed<br>family size <sup>a</sup> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| James Chapman                     | 1795–1802    | –                            | –                         | 'child'               | –                | 3 <sup>b</sup>                        |
| Robert & Mary Savage <sup>c</sup> | 1794–1805    | –                            | –                         | 'boy'<br>'2 children' | 10, 6, 3         | 5                                     |
| William & Jane Herbert            | c. 1800      | 25                           | 24                        | 'girl'                | –                |                                       |
| Thomas & Mary Smith               | c. 1800      | –                            | –                         | 2                     | 3, baby born     | 4                                     |
| William & Ann Stephens            | c. 1800      | 25                           | 25                        | 3                     | 4, 2, baby born  | 3                                     |
| William & Sarah Odell             | c. 1800      | 21                           | 23                        | 4                     | 8, 6, 3, 1       | 10                                    |
| William & Mary Hanks              | c. 1800      | –                            | –                         | 4                     | 8, 5, 2 6m       | 8                                     |
| Thomas & Mary Seeley              | c. 1800–1807 | –                            | –                         | 1                     | 7                | 4                                     |
| James & Ann Kempston              | 1811–1822    | –                            | –                         | –                     | –                | 3 <sup>b</sup>                        |
| William & Nelly Richardson        | 1811–1812    | –                            | –                         | 3                     | 12, 1, baby born | 7                                     |
| James & Ann Humberstone           | 1812–1813    | 23                           | 23                        | 'family'              | –                | 3 <sup>d</sup>                        |
| Braybrook                         | 1817–1824    | –                            | –                         | 3                     | 13, 11, 6        | 5                                     |
| James Sibley                      | 1820–1821    | –                            | –                         | 'son'                 | –                | 3 <sup>b</sup>                        |
| John & Priscilla Smith            | 1820–1822    | 20                           | 16                        | 'family'              | –                | 3 <sup>b</sup>                        |
| William Clow                      | 1821–1823    | –                            | –                         | 2                     | two babies born  | 11                                    |
| Austin & Elizabeth Bowers         | 1824–1826    | 53                           | –                         | '3 children'          | –                | 5 <sup>b</sup>                        |
| Thomas & Sarah Stevens            | 1828–1829    | –                            | –                         | 1                     | 12               | 3                                     |
| James & Martha Whitbread          | 1827–1829    | 19                           | –                         | 2                     | 4, 1             | 5                                     |
|                                   |              |                              |                           | 2                     | 14, 9            | 4                                     |

Source: Source as previous figure.

Notes: <sup>a</sup> these figures are for families who have been successfully linked to the family reconstitution and include parents and all living children (excluding children who die, even after the end of the period here), except for those marked <sup>b</sup>, who are families who could *not* be linked to the family reconstitution, but who are described in the overseers' accounts as 'family', 'wife', 'boy', 'son', 'girl', 'daughter', 'child(ren)', and so these figures represent a *minimum* number of family members. <sup>c</sup> Although there are no burials recorded for Robert and Mary Savage, their children are referred to in the overseers' accounts as if they were orphans. <sup>d</sup> William and Nelly Richardson are linked to the reconstitution, but, although they have registered no births in Shefford, the overseers' accounts refer to a 'family'.

TABLE 3. Duration of Family Allowances in Campton, c. 1800

| <i>Name</i>                | <i>Dates</i>        | <i>Months</i> |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| James & Mary Gregory       | Apr 1800 – Oct 1800 | 7             |
| James & Phoebe Austin      | Feb 1800 – Aug 1800 | 7             |
| Cornelius & Jemima Johnson | Apr 1799 – Aug 1800 | 17            |
| John & Kitty Deverix       | Jan 1800 – Aug 1801 | 20            |
| Joseph & Ann Whittemore    | Dec 1799 – Aug 1801 | 21            |
| William & Elizabeth Newman | Dec 1799 – Aug 1801 | 21            |
| James & Mary Ingram        | Dec 1799 – Aug 1801 | 21            |
| John & Ann Halfhead        | Dec 1799 – Aug 1801 | 21            |
| Henry & Mary Clarke        | Dec 1799 – Aug 1801 | 21            |
| Jonathan & Mary Jordan     | Dec 1799 – Aug 1801 | 21            |
| Thomas & Elizabeth Knight  | Dec 1799 – Mar 1802 | 28            |

*Source:* as Table 1.

second child, with 6*d.* per child per family per week, and so initial child allowance payments for two children were 1*s.* 0*d.* per family per week, 1*s.* 6*d.* for three children, and 2*s.* 0*d.* for four children. Overseers did not follow the scale slavishly, however, and appear to have been extremely sensitive to changes in local prices and the personal needs of each family, since the level of payments varied enormously over the period 1799–1802. While on the whole the more children the allowance was supposed to be for, the higher the allowance, there were considerable variations in the allowance within each category of family size. At the beginning of the child allowance scheme, for instance, families with four children were given 2*s.* 0*d.* a week, which quickly rose to 3*s.* 0*d.*; thereafter, however, payments were between 2*s.* 0*d.* and 5*s.* 0*d.* for families with four children. The parish withdrew allowances to three of the families by the end of 1800 and to a further seven eight months later, in August 1801, while payments continued until March 1802 for Knight's family. The most common length of time that these child allowances were paid was 21 months but their length varied between seven and 28 months. It is evident that there was a high degree of flexibility in this scheme, with payments adjusted up and down according to need and the scheme only endured for as long as the crisis.

When the pauper biographies of these families are examined, however, it becomes clear that although all the payments were made for a set number of children, most of these couples had *more* children than the number specified in the overseers' accounts. William and Elizabeth Newman, for instance, were allocated 3*s.* 0*d.* a week for their 'four children', but they also had another two children, six in total, alive at the time of the pension: James Hine was the eldest at 12, Elizabeth was 10, William was 8, John was 6, Ann was 4, and Sarah was 2. In addition, the couple had a further two babies while in receipt of a child allowance. That the payments were intended for only four of their children suggests that the eldest were working or apprenticed (since there are no burial dates for them), that children at the breast were not included, and that these payments were intended for William, John, Ann and Sarah. Likewise, James and Mary Ingram were allocated 2*s.* 0*d.* a week for two of their children, but they had five children

TABLE 4. Duration of Family Allowances in Shefford, c. 1800

| <i>Name</i>            | <i>Dates</i>        | <i>Months</i> |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| William & Jane Herbett | Nov 1800 – Jul 1801 | 9             |
| William & Mary Hanks   | Aug 1801 – Apr 1802 | 9             |
| William & Sarah Odell  | Oct 1800 – Jul 1801 | 10            |
| William & Ann Stephens | Oct 1800 – Oct 1801 | 12            |
| Thomas & Mary Smith    | Dec 1800 – Apr 1802 | 17            |

*Source:* as Table 2.

under 15 and another who was only a month old. Jonathan and Mary Jordan received 3s. *od.* a week for four of their children, but they had in fact six children under 15, one of whom was only 14 months old. A large family with many young children, and in many cases a new baby, would appear to be the qualifications for these allowances. It would appear that many of the older children were not included in the calculation (even some under 10), suggesting that many of them were working, and this would seem reasonable considering the high proportion of children working in Bedfordshire in this period from a young age, in lace-making or straw-plaiting. This means that families were eligible for child allowances for shorter lengths of time than those in parishes where children were eligible until they were 10 or 12 years old. That many families had more children than for whom they were receiving relief is an important new finding and only results from the careful construction of pauper biographies.<sup>19</sup>

In Shefford, fewer families required parish pensions at the turn of the new century despite its larger size; six families were allocated pensions. Payments began in Shefford between October and December 1800, later than in Campton. The duration of these allowances is shown in Table 4. Payments ceased to the Herbetts and Odells in July 1801, to the Stephens in October of the same year, but not to the Smiths until April 1802. The family of William Hanks received a pension a little later, between August 1801 and April 1802. The average duration of these allowances was around 12 months. In addition, John Bird's family received two large payments of £2 1s. 10*d.* in May and £1 in December 1801. The pension allocated to Thomas and Mary Seeley started somewhat earlier, in February 1799 and continued much longer, until 1807. There was no explicit reference to allowances by scale in the overseers' accounts and so, unlike Campton, the number specified by overseers and the actual number of children per family cannot be compared. Payments in the market town were not perfectly synchronized with the number of children per family, but families with four children did generally receive more than

<sup>19</sup> Of the nine families where it was possible to compare the number of children stated in the overseers' accounts and the family reconstitution forms, only one family had the same number of children in each; that is, eight families contained *more* children than for whom the allowances were specified (40 children in total on the forms, compared with 24 given in the overseers' accounts). On the age of work for children, see Williams, 'Poor relief in Bedfordshire', ch. 7 and O. Saito, 'Who worked when? Life time profiles of labour force participation in Cardington and Corfe Castle in the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries', *Local Population Stud.*, 22 (1979), pp. 14–29. For the price series, see C. Feinstein, 'Pessimism perpetuated: real wages and the standard of living in Britain during and after the industrial revolution', *JEcH* 58 (1998), pp. 625–58.

TABLE 5. Duration of Pensions in Campton c. 1815

| <i>Name</i>               | <i>Dates</i> | <i>Duration of pension</i> |               |
|---------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|---------------|
|                           |              | <i>years</i>               | <i>months</i> |
| John & Nelly Hathfield    | 1817         |                            | 8             |
| John & Mary Lennard       | 1817         |                            | 8             |
| William & Mary Smith      | 1816–1817    |                            | 9             |
| James & Mary Ingram       | 1816–1818    | 2                          | 5             |
| Thomas & Elizabeth Knight | 1816–1819    | 2                          | 8             |
| James & Elizabeth Newman  | 1817–1821    | 4                          | 11            |
| Joseph & Ann Whittemore   | 1817–1822    | 5                          | 5             |

*Source:* as Table 1.

those with fewer children. Considerable flexibility at the parish level can be seen once again: pensions were allocated to these families for differing amounts of time (between nine and 17 months) and pensions were assessed according to local prices and the personal needs of the families. Shefford's overseers also gave out shorter-term relief during these years: to James and Ann Cannon, who was heavily pregnant, and their two children, for the three months between November 1795 and January of the following year, and to Samuel and Martha Ebdon and their child for the five months between February and June 1801.

Of the families who received child allowances in Campton 1799–1802, six required further relief later in their lives. William and Elizabeth Newman returned to the relief rolls in 1804, John Deverix and his family in 1805, and the Clarke family in 1805–6 and again in 1808–13. The other three families came back onto poor relief during the agricultural depression following the Napoleonic Wars: the Whittemores 1816–22, the Knights 1816–19 and the Ingrams 1816–18. A further four families drew relief for the first time after 1815: James and Elizabeth Newman and their children 1817–21, the families of John and Mary Lennard and John and Nelly Hathfield in 1817, and William and Mary Smith and their two children (in 1816–17). Table 5 shows the duration of these post-war family pensions. Thomas Stevens and his family had joined the list of family-pensioners in 1810 and continued to receive a pension not only throughout the immediate post-war period along with these other families, but until 1826. Of those families receiving a pension after 1815, most began between November 1816 and January 1817, but there was no usual end point and pensions lasted for between eight and nine months for the Lennards and Smiths, around three years for the Ingrams and Knights, and between five and six years for the Newmans and Whittemores. Of the families relieved in the post-war depression, three required further relief: Lennard's family were again granted a pension between 1821 and 1832, the Newmans in 1826 and 1827, and the Hathfields between 1828 and 1831. Four new families came on to the relief rolls in the 1820s and 1830s. The Devonshire family received a pension in 1820–1. Two families required relief in 1828–1830: the Devereuxs with seven children and the Stevens and their five children. In the early 1830s only James and Harriet Devereux were allocated relief. Many other families also received short-term relief in the 1820s and 1830s for periods of unemployment.

In Shefford only ten families received parish pensions in the next three decades after the turn of the century. There was no concentration in the immediate post-war period as there was in Campton, but rather a steady trickle of families in receipt of long-term relief. Furthermore, in the case of four of these family-pensioners, it is clear that, although they had dependent children, the pension was in fact intended to assist in old age, unemployment and illness. John and Priscilla Smith received a weekly payment for two years between 1820 and 1822, during which time they had two babies, but the overseers recorded that John had a 'bad arm' which kept him from working. Thomas and Sarah Stevens had children aged four and one when they came onto relief in February 1828, but Thomas, who had been admitted to the Bedford Infirmary in 1820, required a further visit in August 1828 and substantial parish support. Austin Bowers still had one child under 15 (12 years old), but was himself aged 65 and received regular relief in the two years leading up to his death in 1826. Likewise, although a daughter is mentioned in the overseers' accounts for Thomas Seeley and his wife, Thomas is described as 'old'.

Tables 6 and 7 show the duration of allowances (excluding those paid c. 1800). In Campton over the entire period 1767–1834, 13 families received pensions for a year or more, but only five of these received longer-term pensions of five years or more. In Shefford, ten families received pensions for a year or more, but once again, only five of these families received pensions for five or more years. Shorter-term pensions – between 6 and 12 months – were awarded to six families in the rural parish and to two families in the market town. In addition in the market town, some families were paid large lump sums (see Table 8). In the majority of these cases the length of time these payments were intended to cover was not recorded by the parish overseer, but it is likely that these were out-relief pensions.<sup>20</sup>

It is evident that in these two communities family-pensioners were largely concentrated in the period 1798–1802, with a further concentration of family-pensioners in Campton after 1815; outside of these periods, far fewer families required assistance. It is no wonder that Bedfordshire magistrates thought allowances common in the county in 1800 and 1818, but this does not mean that allowances were pervasive throughout the period 1790 to 1834. These periods of pensions to families will not have been recorded in the parliamentary papers of 1824 and 1832 upon which so many historians rely. The evidence available before 1824 from other local studies confirms the picture that many parishes adopted allowance schemes in the short-term, usually only in times of exceptionally high prices. In the Essex parish of Ardleigh it was predominantly agricultural labourers' families with young children who were deemed as 'deserving' poor relief during the catastrophic winter of 1795–6 and they were allocated cash payments in proportion to family size, subsidized flour, and free coal. The parish again gave poor relief to families on the 'flour list' between October 1799 and October 1801. Other Essex parishes assisted large families with allowances between 1795 and 1801, but relief was limited to periods of very high prices and

<sup>20</sup> Out-relief pensions were paid to families legally settled in Campton or Shefford but living elsewhere. Those with a settlement in these two communities were eligible for relief from Campton or Shefford only, and not the parish in which they were residing. In practical terms, this meant that the overseers sent pensions in lump sums to the overseers in the claimants' parish of residence. See T. Sokoll (ed.), *Essex pauper letters, 1731–1837* (Records of social and economic history, new ser., 30, 2001).

TABLE 6. Duration of Pensions in Campton, 1767–1834

| <i>Name</i>                | <i>Dates</i> | <i>Duration of pension</i> |               |
|----------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|---------------|
|                            |              | <i>years</i>               | <i>months</i> |
| John & Kitty Deverix       | 1805         |                            | 6             |
| Henry & Mary Clarke        | 1805–1806    |                            | 6             |
| James & Elizabeth Newman   | 1817–1821    |                            | 6             |
| James & Elizabeth Newman   | 1826–1827    |                            | 6             |
| John & Sarah Waller        | 1768–1769    |                            | 7             |
| James & Sarah Devonshire   | 1820–1821    |                            | 8             |
| William & Elizabeth Newman | 1804         |                            | 10            |
| James & Harriet Devereux   | 1833         | 1                          | 0             |
| Joseph & Mary Stevens      | 1828–1830    | 1                          | 6             |
| William & Hannah Devereux  | 1828–1830    | 1                          | 7             |
| John & Nelly Hathfield     | 1828–1831    | 2                          | 3             |
| James & Mary Ingram        | 1816–1818    | 2                          | 5             |
| Thomas & Ann Hayes         | 1777–1780    | 2                          | 6             |
| Thomas & Elizabeth Knight  | 1816–1819    | 2                          | 8             |
| William & Lucy Newman      | 1794–1798    | 4                          | 5             |
| Henry & Mary Clarke        | 1808–1813    | 5                          | 0             |
| Joseph & Ann Whittemore    | 1817–1822    | 5                          | 5             |
| John & Mary Lennard        | 1821–1832    | 10                         | 11            |
| Charles & Ursula Bland     | 1798–1812    | 14                         | 3             |
| Thomas Stevens             | 1810–1826    | 16                         | 0             |

*Source:* as Table 1.

entitlement to them controlled. Generally, when prices fell, allowances were discontinued. In terms of the proportion of labouring families in receipt of such allowances, the Essex parish of Great Saling paid between 10 and 14 labourers out of a total of around 50 labourers in the parish. In a later period, allowances were allowed to families of four and above in the parish of Thaxted in 1812, but again only for the duration of high prices. Likewise, in Kent and Sussex systematic relief to the able-bodied in the form of bread scales was most often found in crisis years such as 1776, 1801 and 1813, and that the sale of subsidised flour and the lists of the casual poor were only short-term. Neuman, in his study of 16 Berkshire parishes, found that allowances were often temporary responses to unusually severe seasons and high prices. We have already noted his point that whilst it is assumed that Speenhamland payments were ‘ordered, universal and persistent’, allowances were in fact often sporadic and locally diverse. Sokoll, commenting on poor relief policy in Ardleigh in the 1790s, argues that it is striking how quickly the overseers responded to the worsening material conditions of the poor and that this is true for downward swings in wheat prices as well as upward ones. He suggests that this is evidence against any ‘revolution of rising expectations’ with regard to poor relief. The most recently published monographs by Alan Kidd, Steve King and Lynn Hollen Lees have concluded from these local studies

TABLE 7. Duration of Pensions in Shefford, 1794–1828

| Name                       | Dates     | Duration of pension |        |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------------------|--------|
|                            |           | years               | months |
| William & Nelly Richardson | 1811–12   |                     | 8      |
| James Sibley               | 1820–21   |                     | 8      |
| James & Ann Humberstone    | 1812–13   | 1                   | 2      |
| Thomas & Sarah Stevens     | 1828–29   | 1                   | 2      |
| James & Martha Whitbread   | 1827–29   | 1                   | 7      |
| William Clow               | 1821–23   | 1                   | 9      |
| John & Priscilla Smith     | 1820–22   | 1                   | 11     |
| Austin & Elizabeth Bowers  | 1824–26   | 1                   | 11     |
| Braybrook                  | 1817–1824 | 6                   | 10     |
| James Chapman              | 1795–1802 | 7                   | 0      |
| Thomas and Mary Seeley     | 1799–1807 | 8                   | 2      |
| James & Ann Kempston       | 1811–1822 | 10                  | 6      |
| Robert & Mary Savage       | 1794–1805 | 11                  | 0      |

Source: as Table 2.

that allowances were a temporary expedient adopted during particularly hard times and were rapidly reduced or abandoned when conditions became easier.<sup>21</sup>

How much were these pensions worth to families? Pensions paid out during the crisis years at the turn of the century were likely to have been only ever supplementary to earned income, and this is reflected in the figures cited above whereby families were allocated proportionately less in terms of pensions and occasional relief than they accounted for in numbers. Allowances in the two communities ranged from between 1s. *od.* and 3s. *od.* per family per week, with the most commonly given sums of 2s. *od.* and 3s. *od.*, and depended on the size of the family and their personal needs and local prices. The fact that they were paid at all suggests that the parish authorities believed the incomes of labouring families to be insufficient in the face of harvest failures and wartime price inflation. Child allowances ‘topped up’ incomes to a ‘minimum’ standard envisaged by local overseers and magistrates. Local weekly male wage rates in Bedfordshire in the 1790s were between 7s. *od.* and 9s. *od.*, and so the average allowance of 25*d.* a week represented between 23 and 30 per cent of these wages. Horrell and Humphries have computed the average annual income of families employed in low wage agriculture at around £26 at this time, so the average allowance might have represented 21 per cent of annual income. It is likely that child allowances accounted for a *smaller* proportion than this in Campton and

<sup>21</sup> Sokoll, *Household and family*, ch. 5; Wall, ‘Families in crisis’; A. F. J. Brown, *Essex at Work, 1700–1815* (Essex Record Office publications, 49, 1969), pp. 151–3; Baugh, ‘Poor relief in south-east England’; Neuman, ‘Speenhamland in Berkshire’, pp. 99, 101–9; id., *The Speenhamland county*; A. Kidd, *State, society and the poor in nineteenth-century England* (1999), p. 15; King, *Poverty and welfare*, p. 34; Lynn Hollen Lees, *The solidarities of strangers. The English Poor Law and the people, 1700–1948* (1998), pp. 66–8.

TABLE 8. Family-Pensioners in Shefford: Lump Sums, 1794–1828

| <i>Name</i>                 | <i>Dates</i> | <i>Husband's<br/>age at<br/>marriage</i> | <i>Wife's age at<br/>marriage</i> | <i>Number<br/>of children</i> | <i>Ages<br/>of children</i> | <i>Completed<br/>family size <sup>a</sup></i> |
|-----------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| William & Mary Hanks        | 1798         | —                                        | —                                 | 2                             | 4, 1                        | 3                                             |
| John Bird                   | 1801         | —                                        | —                                 | 'family'                      | —                           | 3 <sup>b</sup>                                |
| William & Nelly Richardson  | 1804–1808    | —                                        | —                                 | 'family'                      | —                           | 3 <sup>c</sup>                                |
| James & Ann Kempston        | 1807–1808    | —                                        | —                                 | 3                             | 13, 11, 8                   | 7                                             |
|                             | 1811         |                                          |                                   | 2                             | 12, 1                       |                                               |
| Benjamin & Rebecca Gilbert  | 1810         | 31                                       | —                                 | 4                             | twins 14<br>twins 10        | 11                                            |
| Joseph & Rebecca Stonbridge | 1822         | —                                        | —                                 | 'family'                      |                             | 3 <sup>b</sup>                                |

*Source:* as Table 2.

*Notes:* <sup>a</sup> these figures are for families who have been successfully linked to the family reconstitution and include parents and all living children (excluding children who die, even after the end of the period here), except for those marked <sup>b</sup>, who are families who could *not* be linked to the family reconstitution, but who are described in the overseers' accounts as 'family', 'wife', 'boy', 'son', 'girl', 'daughter', 'child(ren)', and so these figures represent a *minimum* number of family members. <sup>c</sup> William and Nelly Richardson are linked to the reconstitution, but, although they have registered no births in Shefford, the overseers' accounts refer to a 'family'.

Shefford, since wives and children contributed to the family economy through their lace-making and straw-plaiting. During the French Wars, despite price inflation, the cessation of foreign imports had increased demand and so wage levels in the two trades. In 1795 women could earn from 6s. *od.* to 12s. *od.* a week straw-plaiting and children between 2s. *od.* and 4s. *od.* a week. In 1808 earnings over 12s. *od.* a week were recorded for women straw-plaiters and women lace-makers could earn between 5s. *od.* and 9s. *od.* a week. It must be remembered that straw-plaiting was seasonal and high earnings were restricted to the months between April and June, when the price of plait doubled. Due to this, it is difficult to estimate the annual income of a labourer's family. Of three budgets of labouring households from a neighbouring parish in 1795, the average allowance represented 16 per cent of annual income. Elsewhere, Wall has estimated the value of the crisis relief provided by the overseers in Ardleigh, Essex, between December 1795 and March 1796, taking £30 as a possible annual income of a labourer's family. He found that although the combined schemes of child allowance cash payments, subsidized flour, and free coal would have accounted for up to 55 per cent of a labourer's annual income. These benefits did not entirely compensate for the rise in wheat prices, falling short by around 15 per cent.<sup>22</sup>

It is more difficult to make similar calculations for allowances in Campton in the immediate post-war period since the duration of allowances and the sums received by each family varied enormously, and far less could be earned in lace-making and straw-plaiting. In 1832 women lace makers could only earn between 1s. 6*d.* and 3s. *od.* a week, and earnings had fallen sharply to between 5s. *od.* and 10s. *od.* a week in straw-plaiting, although these earnings still compared

<sup>22</sup> Wall, 'Families in crisis', pp. 113–15; F. M. Eden, *The state of the poor: or a history of the labouring classes in England* (3 vols, 1797), III, p. cccxxxix.

favourably with male earnings in agriculture of between 9s. *od.* and 12s. *od.* Lennard's family was allocated an allowance for just eight months and received £2 13s. 6*d.*, while Whittemore's family received an allowance for six years, averaging £11 per annum. Since a number of families received pensions over several years, it is clear that the post-war depression's effect was longer than the previous crisis. In addition, unemployment and under-employment became pervasive for the many men and boys employed in agriculture. It is unlikely that families received much assistance from local charities or self-provisioning, although rather more could be obtained from friendly societies in times of sickness and unemployment. In Campton charitable relief was limited to just £5 in cash and two-penny loaves distributed once a year, and in Shefford there was no charitable provision for the poor. Following enclosure in 1798 few families had access to common rights. Friendly societies rapidly increased in number in the first half of the nineteenth century, and in 1803–4 there were four in Shefford, with a total of 146 members. This could account for 31 per cent of the town's inhabitants, although it is likely that not all of these members were from Shefford, but that some members lived in neighbouring parishes, possibly including Campton. Payments could be as high as 8s. *od.* a week, but such pay-outs were restricted in duration and, moreover, they were only for bouts of illness or temporary unemployment. In times of high prices, such as 1799–1801 and 1815–22, or for longer periods without sufficient work, labouring families had no option but to turn to the poor law.<sup>23</sup>

In both communities, most families received less than £7 a year in regular poor relief. Some were allocated between £7 and £14, but only a handful received payments higher than £14 a year. In the case of one family only – the Kempstons of Shefford – were payments so high that the parish must have been their main source of income and the sums they received were quite exceptional; their average annual payment was £18 and between 1812 and 1820 the annual pension never fell below £14, and was as high as £28 in 1813 and £25 in 1814. In Campton, John and Mary Lennard received comparable sums, but only for 1824 (£30) and 1825 (£28); in other years they received around £10. Similarly, Charles and Mary Bland, Henry and Mary Clarke, and Thomas Stevens' family were all given sums as high as £15 or £20 in specific years, but they more commonly received far less.

There were important urban-rural differences in relief allocation to families between Campton and Shefford. As a proportion of pensioners, Shefford relieved fewer pensioner-families and spent proportionally less on them than Campton. This could merely reflect the fact that there were far fewer labourers, and a decreasing number, in the market town, although this would be to assume that only the families of agricultural labourers required parish assistance, and not the families of those employed in other occupations. After 1815 it is possible that women and children earned less in lace-making and straw-plaiting and the incomes of their families might have required supplementing by the parish. More broadly, Shefford did relieve a smaller proportion of the total population than Campton, giving pensions to around

<sup>23</sup> Wage rates taken from Eden, *The state of the poor*, II, p. 2; N. Verdon, *Rural women workers*, ch. 5. S. Horrell and J. Humphries, 'Old questions, new data, and alternative perspectives: families' living standards in the industrial revolution', *JECH* 52 (1992), pp. 849–90. The evidence on alternative sources of income is from: BPP, 1823, VIII, *Reports from Commissioners: charities in England and Wales*, pp. 7–9. BLARS, X465/320 (Indenture, 1834); Young, 'Minutes concerning parliamentary inclosures', p. 27; *Rural Queries for Bedfordshire*; BPP, 1803–4, XIII, *Abstract of Answers and Returns relative to the Expense and Maintenance of the Poor*, pp. 1–8.

15 per cent of inhabitants between 1811 and 1831, whereas Campton relieved up to 30 per cent of their residents. Campton also spent more on its resident poor. Many other urban centres relieved fewer families and spent considerably less on their poorer inhabitants. In 1792, Howlett had observed that not only large manufacturing towns, but also parishes that were partly town and partly country relieved fewer people and spent significantly less on their poorer inhabitants. In the Essex parishes containing the towns of Thaxted and Stebbing, one-quarter of their populations were relieved, whereas in four rural parishes up to one half received poor relief.<sup>24</sup>

We have seen that for the majority of families parish pensions were supplementary and limited to very specific years of great hardship. Couples could not have predicted that at some point in the future, when they had started to raise a family, they would be eligible for these allowance schemes. It is doubtful that poor relief, limited in terms of duration and amount, could have 'encouraged' couples to marry and 'breed recklessly'. We have also seen that many families in receipt of relief at the turn of the century had very large families and the wait between marriage and qualifying for relief would have been long. Rather, allowances were given in the crisis years of 1800–1 to families who already had a large number of children. The evidence presented to this point shows that families only received pensions on a large scale after 1790 and that allowances in Campton in 1800 were given to large families. This suggests that parish allowances could only have been a necessary *response* to previous falls in the age at marriage and the consequential increase in fertility which fuelled rapid population growth. The timing of the fall in the age at first marriage is therefore crucial if we are to confirm that allowances were the response to, rather than the cause of, this change.

#### IV

Age at marriage for all women in Campton and Shefford fell steadily throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The figures for female mean age at marriage in bachelor/spinster marriages in 50-year blocks are shown in Table 9 and reveal a steady decline. Age at marriage fell more sharply in Campton and Shefford than in the country as a whole.

Figure 1 shows much the same information but in greater detail, with data for the period 1700–1830 divided into ten-year periods. Age at first marriage for women declined from 25.3 in 1700 to 23.0 in 1790, to its lowest point at 20.9 in 1810, but rose slightly to 22.8 in 1830. Male age at first marriage declined more sharply, from 27.3 in 1700, to 23.4 by 1790, and fell further to 22.1 in 1830. When viewed in this long-term perspective, men's and women's ages at marriage had been falling for at least a century before allowances were introduced. It has to be conceded that the age of brides fell from a plateau of 23 in the 1780s, 1790s and 1800s, to just 20.9 in the decade 1810–19, and it could be suggested that this further and significant fall coincides with the allocation of allowances to seven families after 1816; but there was no similar fall for grooms and, taken in this broader chronological sweep, it is difficult to sustain this line of argument. It seems far more likely that allowances were a necessary response to the rapid population increase over

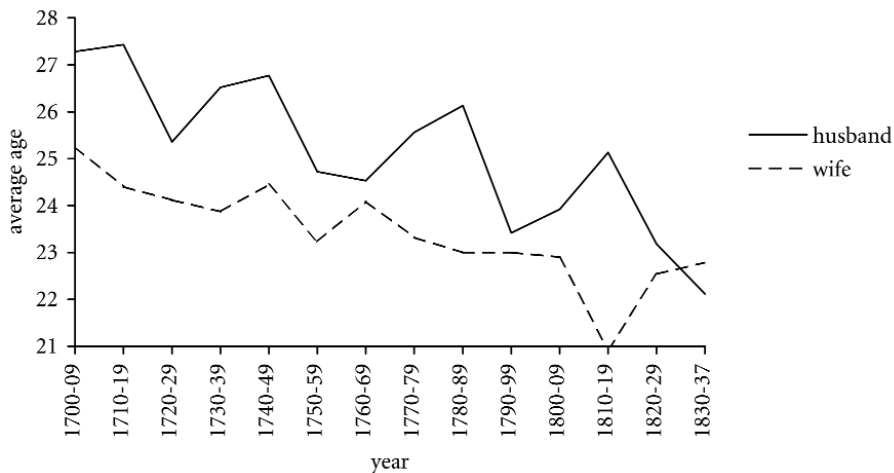
<sup>24</sup> Williams, 'Poor relief in Bedfordshire', ch. 4; Huzel, 'Demographic impact', pp. 369–75, and especially Table 2; Brown, *Essex at work*, pp. 151–3; J. Howlett, 'On the population and situation of the poor in England', *Annals of Agriculture* 18 (1792), pp. 573–81.

TABLE 9. Mean age at marriage in bachelor/spinster marriages in Campton-with-Shefford and Southill

| <i>Period</i> | <i>Male mean age at marriage</i> | <i>Female mean age at marriage</i> |
|---------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1600–49       | 27.3                             | 25.3                               |
| 1650–99       | 26.8                             | 24.4                               |
| 1700–49       | 26.6                             | 24.4                               |
| 1750–99       | 24.7                             | 23.3                               |
| 1800–37       | 23.5                             | 22.4                               |

Source: Campton, Shefford and Southill reconstruction.

FIGURE 1. Average age at first marriage in Campton-with-Shefford and Southill, 1700–1830



Source: Campton, Shefford and Southill reconstruction.

the century, as well as to the harvest failures of the 1790s and 1800s, the price inflation of the war years, and the unemployment and under-employment of the post-war period.<sup>25</sup>

All this suggests that some families came to require assistance after 1790 because they had

<sup>25</sup> Campton-with-Shefford and Southill family reconstitution; Wrigley *et al.*, *English population history*, pp. 134, 146–7, 184–5, 192–3. The numbers observed for average age at first marriage in Campton-with-Shefford and Southill per decade, 1700–1830, are: 1700–09 husband 18, wife 32; 1710–19, 24, 28; 1720–9, 25, 38; 1730–9, 23, 32; 1740–9, 15, 34; 1750–9, 17, 28; 1760–9, 40, 39; 1770–9, 30, 34; 1780–9, 27, 46; 1790–9, 39, 53; 1800–09, 44, 63; 1810–19, 31, 49. Ruggles has pointed out that because family reconstitution effectively misses late marriages after migration, it is possible that the average age at marriage is understated, although Wrigley argues that this does not pose a serious problem, as the mean age at marriage of ‘stayers’ is identical to ‘leavers’. S. Ruggles, ‘Migration, marriage and mortality: correcting sources of bias in English family reconstitution’, *Pop. Stud.*, 46 (1992), pp. 507–33; E. A. Wrigley, ‘How reliable is our knowledge of the demographic characteristics of the English population in the early modern period?’, *Historical J.*, 40 (1997), pp. 571–95.

married young and had a larger family. Tables 1, 2 and 3 give the age at first marriage, where known (and for only small numbers), for all the couples with children receiving parish pensions in both communities. In Campton the average age of brides was 21.5 and 24 for grooms, while in Shefford the average age for brides was 22.2 and 23.4 for grooms. These figures are similar to those given in Figure 1 and suggest that these brides and grooms were not so very different from their peers. A fair number did marry young, with just under half of all these women for whom we can establish an age at marriage marrying in their teens: Kitty Deverix and Harriet Devereux, for instance, were 17, and Priscilla Smith married at just 16. It must be remembered that the other half of the family-pensioner brides were in their twenties when they married. There were 143 marriages in Campton, Shefford and Southill between 1767 and 1834 of 'young marriers', that is where one spouse was known to be in their teens. These numbers are swollen since they include those also marrying in Southill, but of these 143 marriages only 10 couples later received poor relief in Campton or Shefford. Furthermore, Tables 1, 2 and 3 also make it clear that many of the families who required parish assistance went on to have more children without requiring further parish assistance, and this suggests that it was 'hard times' rather than marrying young or having a large family alone that tipped the balance for these families and necessitated a period of parish assistance.<sup>26</sup>

Other recent demographic research also supports the argument that there was no causal relationship between welfare provision and changes in marriage behaviour. Rather, it appears that age at marriage was falling for all social groups in many different regions and not just for those who might be in receipt of parish allowance payments. The unusually full records for the retail and handicraft town of Banbury, Oxfordshire, and the river port of Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, make it possible to calculate the age at first marriage by occupation. In both communities age at marriage fell throughout the eighteenth century for men and women of all social groups, and in Banbury there was a remarkable convergence in female age at marriage at around 24 by 1800. On a much wider scale, the most important trend to emerge from recent work at the Cambridge Group – Wrigley *et al.*'s *English Population History from Family Reconstitution* – is that nuptiality displayed similar patterns across all of their 26 reconstitution parishes. Despite marked differences in the occupational make-up of these parishes, all the communities experienced a marked fall in age at first marriage; the fall was, they argue, remarkably uniform both geographically and in socio-economic terms and the age at marriage for all social groups converged towards the end of the eighteenth century. They suggest that this evidence points towards a marked homogeneity in marriage behaviour throughout the country. It is not my purpose here to speculate on the reasons for the decline in age at marriage, but rather to insist that there is little substantive evidence from the perspective of welfare provision. If historians want to explain this phenomenon, then they will have to look elsewhere.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> These figures exclude Bowers, who married far later than the other grooms. It is possible that this is a second marriage.

<sup>27</sup> On age at marriage by occupation in Banbury and Gainsborough, see P. M. Kitson, 'Seasonal perspectives upon relationships between fertility, nuptiality and economic change in England, c. 1538–1800' (PhD thesis in

progress, University of Cambridge). Earlier work on Banbury was undertaken by S. Lauricella, 'Economic and social influences on marriage in Banbury, 1730–1841' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1997), ch. 3 and in particular figs 3.9 and 3.10, pp. 81–2. Definitions of different types of parishes by Wrigley *et al.* were as follows: 'agricultural' – those where 60 per cent

## V

The findings presented here for the case-study of Campton and Shefford indicate that the poor law had little influence on the age at marriage of agricultural labourers. In these two Bedfordshire communities, while there was a long-term decline in age at first marriage, families received some form of allowances only after 1790 and usually for only limited periods, such as 1800–1 and the post-war years. Allowances in these two communities were a temporary solution to an immediate crisis and were rarely the normal method of maintaining labourers. Rather, the administration of payments to families was characterized by a high degree of flexibility. This study has also found that allowances were usually allocated to very large families only and, moreover, that many of these families went on to have further children but did not require additional parish assistance. After the crisis of c. 1800, only 10–20 per cent of families in Campton required pensions and the figure was half that for Shefford. In sum, it seems highly unlikely that allowances were the cause of early marriages and larger families, despite Malthus's protestations. Instead, the research presented here suggests that allowances to large families were a necessary *response* to the sharply worsened circumstances after 1790.

*Note 27 continued*

or more of the adult male labour force in the 1831 census were engaged in agriculture; 'retail, trade and handicrafts' – those with 40 per cent or more in this category at the same census; 'manufacturing' – 30 per cent or more; and 'mixed' – those parishes not complying with these other definitions. Wrigley *et al.*, *English population history*, pp. 28–39; ch. 5.

# Young women, work and family in inter-war rural England

by Selina Todd

## Abstract

While previous studies of youth have concentrated on urban, commercial leisure developments, this article scrutinises young women through the prism of their labour. It argues that young women's paid employment and domestic labour were crucial to the family economy of the rural poor in inter-war England. However, they were also subject to profound social, economic and cultural changes. In 1918 domestic service was the largest employer of these women, offering limited income and leisure. Twenty years later, an increasing number were entering industrial work in urban areas, prompting the decline of domestic and farm service and forging a new pattern of migration from the countryside.

Over the last two decades, women's work and, more recently, their leisure, have been brought into the limelight by historians of inter-war England.<sup>1</sup> However, the experiences of rural women are, in this respect as in so many others, still greatly neglected. This gap in the existing studies represents a serious omission, not only because it neglects a substantial group of women, but also because it prevents a satisfactory analysis of two important trends in twentieth-century social and economic development: the decline of domestic and farm service and rural depopulation. This article attempts to fill that gap by examining young rural women's labour force participation in inter-war England, paying particular attention to the changing role of employment in domestic and farm service and to migration patterns. It also highlights important aspects of the oft-neglected relationship between town and country in inter-war England and stresses the importance of the life-cycle, as well as gender and social class, in shaping life in rural communities.

The few existing studies of women's work in inter-war England have concentrated on urban areas.<sup>2</sup> Part of the reason for this is the strong sexual division of labour in many rural areas throughout this period, with married women's labour force participation being lower than the national average in many rural communities.<sup>3</sup> While the increase in historical research on rural

<sup>1</sup> S. Alexander, 'Becoming a woman in London in the 1920s and 1930s', in Alexander, *Becoming a woman. Essays in nineteenth- and twentieth-century feminist history* (1994), pp. 203–24; E. Roberts, *A woman's place* (1984), pp. 39–80; A. Davies, *Leisure, gender and poverty: Manchester and Salford, 1900–1939* (1992); C. Langhamer, *Women's leisure in England, 1920–1960* (2000).

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Roberts, *Woman's place*; id., *Women's work, 1840–1940* (1988); M. Glucksmann, *Women assemble* (1990).

<sup>3</sup> L. Tilly and J. Scott, *Women, work and family* (1978); J. Lewis, *Women in England, 1870–1950. Sexual divisions and social change* (1984); D. Beddoe, *Back to home and duty* (1989), p. 8.

women's work over the last decade has demonstrated that it is a worthy subject for inquiry, the inter-war period remains neglected, frequently being perceived as the 'long weekend' when women returned to 'home and duty' following the First World War.<sup>4</sup> However, this neglects the importance of young, single women within the inter-war workforce, as breadwinners within rural working-class households, and also as migrants into towns, who had an influence on socio-economic trends in urban as well as rural areas. Young women between the school leaving age – 12 prior to 1921, 14 thereafter – and 24 years of age constituted over 45 per cent of the female workforce throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In this article, young women are subdivided into 'girls', denoting juveniles under 18 years of age, and young adult women, aged between 18 and 24, a division evident in contemporary records, including the Census. The average age of first marriage among women never fell below 25 throughout the period – the reason why it forms the upper age limit of this study – and consequently paid work was a distinguishing characteristic of youth for many women.

Despite the gradual expansion of industrial, clerical and retail employment for young women after the First World War, the largest occupation for this group remained domestic service into the 1930s. This actually increased its share of the young female workforce slightly between 1921 and 1931, when it accounted for 24.3 per cent of them.<sup>5</sup> Domestic service was a particularly large employer in rural and semi-rural areas: the largest concentration of servants was in East Sussex, where 36.4 per cent of juvenile girls were thus employed in 1931, and 30.8 per cent of all women above the school leaving age.<sup>6</sup> These figures highlight the significance of young countrywomen in the development and decline of domestic service, a decline which, this article will argue, was greatly accelerated in the 1930s. A similar trend can be traced in farm service, which employed a far smaller proportion of young rural women.

In this paper a wide range of sources is used to examine young rural women's participation in the labour force. The occupation tables of the Census of England and Wales for 1921 and 1931 are the richest datasets available, despite ambiguities in the classification of servants which we shall consider later. Most contemporary social surveys were urban in focus but the *New Survey of London Life and Labour* and the *Social Survey of Merseyside* offer some insights into the migration and employment patterns of young women from rural districts. Reports on youth employment and unemployment, compiled by the Ministry of Labour and by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) supplement the Census data. Finally, this article draws on 24 testimonies from women who grew up in inter-war rural England which have either been collected by oral historians, or are published.<sup>7</sup> These sources suggest that older children, identified by Verdon as essential to the nineteenth-century family economy in many rural areas, remained important

<sup>4</sup> Beddoe, *Back to home and duty*, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Census of England and Wales, 1921*, Occupation Tables, 1924, table 3; *Census of England and Wales, 1931*, Occupation Tables, 1934, table 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Census of England and Wales, 1931*, Occupation Tables, 1934, table 18.

<sup>7</sup> The 'personal testimonies' used here are drawn from three published autobiographies and 21 recorded and transcribed interviews. The recordings were located through the ESRC qualidata archive and held in the

following archives: East Sussex RO, Lewes in Living Memory collection (hereafter ESRO, Lewes); Modern Records Centre (hereafter MRC), University of Warwick, Coventry Women's Work collection; Nottingham Local Studies Library, Making Ends Meet oral history collection (hereafter NLSL, MEMC); Tameside Local Studies Library, Manchester Studies collection (hereafter TLSC, MSC); Lancashire RO, North-West Sound Archive (hereafter LRO, NWSA).

as household breadwinners in the inter-war period.<sup>8</sup> Their economic significance varied, shaped by household composition and the local labour market, but in many areas it increased, rather than diminished, as a result of high male unemployment. Young rural women's experiences thus qualify optimistic assessments of the working class standard of living in the inter-war period. They also undermine the image of inter-war rural England as an unchanging, static society, for while continuity in employment trends is evident across the 1920s and early 1930s, the later 1930s witnessed an expansion of labour demand in the retail, tertiary and industrial sectors which led to changes in young rural women's employment patterns, and encouraged their migration to urban areas. Youth thus emerges as a distinct and memorable life stage for many rural women, although it was shaped by paid work and migration, rather than by the commercial leisure consumption which historians of urban areas have seen as characterising this stage of life. Their employment and migration patterns meant that these young women were at the forefront of social and economic changes in the countryside.

The remainder of this article is in three parts. The first uses Northumberland as a case study to examine the effect which the household and local labour market had on young women's employment patterns. The continuing importance of domestic service as an employer of this group is highlighted. The changes within, and decline of both domestic and farm service are then analysed in section two. Young women's growing desire to avoid or leave residential service was fuelled by and in turn shaped industrial expansion in the 1930s, the subject of section three. It is argued that young rural women, particularly those who experienced unemployment, were particularly important in shaping the new industrial workforce, and were thus significant in the changing relationship between town and country in the inter-war period. The evidence presented here supports Saville's assertion, strengthened by Hill's research, that women were instrumental in rural depopulation, as employment opportunities expanded for them in urban areas, and their own socio-economic aspirations rose.<sup>9</sup> However, it pinpoints the 1930s as particularly significant in this regard, and highlights the centrality of young, single women as a social and economic group distinct from their male peers and older women in their employment and their aspirations.

## I

Northumberland is not presented here as 'typical' of rural districts, for local labour markets in rural as well as urban areas continued to vary significantly through the inter-war years as Howkins' recent study illustrates.<sup>10</sup> However, a brief case study of the county highlights the importance of local labour demand and household employment patterns in shaping young rural women's labour force participation. Moreover, a larger proportion of women were employed in agriculture in Northumberland, including in farm service, than in any other area of the country. Family hiring, whereby a male worker was hired on condition he would provide

<sup>8</sup> N. Verdon, 'The rural labour market in the early nineteenth century: women's and children's employment, family income, and the 1834 Poor Law Report', *EcHR* 55 (2002), pp. 299–323.

<sup>9</sup> J. Saville, *Rural depopulation in England and Wales,*

1851–1951 (1957), pp. 31–7; B. Hill, 'Rural-urban migration of women and their employment in towns', *Rural Hist.*, 5 (1994), pp. 185–94.

<sup>10</sup> A. Howkins, *The death of rural England. A social history of the countryside since 1900* (2003), pp. 77–8.

at least one female labourer when necessary, was a longstanding characteristic of the county, since young male workers were likely to be able to find more lucrative employment in the mining industry. This tradition was supported by the demands of the family economy, since the low wages paid to male labourers required supplement.<sup>11</sup> This system of hiring was in decline by the inter-war period, in part due to agricultural depression, which reduced labour demand. This, and the post-war and early 1930s industrial depressions, which also hit Northumberland hard, help explain why the county reflected the national increase in domestic servants between 1921 and 1931, but also exhibited increasing outward migration through the 1930s.

In rural districts, limited local employment for women frequently increased reliance on male breadwinners. Many Northumbrian communities remained heavily dependent upon either mining or agriculture for adult employment: in 1931, 34 per cent of men were employed as miners and 10 per cent in agriculture. Traditionally, miners enjoyed relatively high wages, and this, together with a lack of alternative local industrial employment, had increased reliance upon male breadwinning; just seven per cent of women were engaged in paid employment in 1931. Unfortunately, the County Tables of the Census do not provide a full disaggregation of the working population by age and gender, but data of this kind is recorded for juveniles, and shows that 43 per cent of girls were in paid employment in Northumberland in 1931 compared with 78 per cent of boys.<sup>12</sup>

In such communities, maintaining a daughter at home denoted respectability, a variable concept which in this localised context signified adult men's ability to support their families. Figure One shows that in 1931 43.5 per cent of Northumberland girls were unoccupied, as Linda McCullough Thew recalled:

I remember one father saying of his daughter who left the secondary school at 14 because he wasn't going to have her worry herself into an early grave with all that 'book stuff'. 'With three men working, it's a pity if we can't keep one lass at home without her having to work'.<sup>13</sup>

This practice of keeping a daughter, often the eldest daughter, at home was evident in households headed by skilled manual workers elsewhere in rural England, as Gittins and Roberts have shown.<sup>14</sup>

Absence from the labour market did not denote a life of leisure, however; the practice was partly a response to a maternal need for domestic help in large households, a characteristic of mining communities.<sup>15</sup> A daughter maintained at home was important in sustaining wage-earners, helping their mother to make or mend work clothes and to prepare meals, and relieving the maternal domestic burden by caring for younger siblings and undertaking housework. In rural areas self-provisioning activities, through the maintenance of a garden, or some

<sup>11</sup> P. Horn, *Victorian countrywomen* (1991), pp. 157–9.

<sup>12</sup> It is impossible to provide a meaningful comparison with juveniles' participation rates in 1921, since the definition of juvenile in the 1921 census included a large number of children of compulsory school-age, although the proportion of those unoccupied is included in the table presented here for both years.

<sup>13</sup> L. McCullough Thew, *The pit village and the store* (1985), p. 124.

<sup>14</sup> D. Gittins, *Fair sex* (1982), p. 70; Roberts, *Woman's place*, pp. 39–40.

<sup>15</sup> C. V. Butler, *Domestic service. An enquiry by the Women's Industrial Council* (1916), p. 74; Gittins, *Fair sex*, pp. 116–88.

TABLE 1. Occupational distribution of girls, Northumberland, 1921 and 1931

| Occupation                            | 1921                     |         | 1931                     |         |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|
|                                       | No. girls<br>(14–17 yrs) | % girls | No. girls<br>(14–17 yrs) | % girls |
| Agriculture                           | 685                      | 2.32    | 287                      | 2.05    |
| Textiles                              | 104                      | 0.35    | 54                       | 0.39    |
| Textile goods                         | 1124                     | 3.81    | 150                      | 1.07    |
| Old industries                        | 0                        | 0.00    | 34                       | 0.24    |
| New industries                        | 498                      | 1.69    | 76                       | 0.54    |
| Transport and communication           | 716                      | 2.42    | 171                      | 1.22    |
| Shop assistants                       | 2243                     | 7.59    | 1086                     | 7.77    |
| Domestic service                      | 4033                     | 13.65   | 2950                     | 21.12   |
| Other personal service                | 640                      | 2.17    | 373                      | 2.67    |
| Professional, commerce, entertainment | 306                      | 1.04    | 75                       | 0.54    |
| Clerical                              | 1334                     | 4.52    | 445                      | 3.19    |
| Labourers/unskilled                   | 451                      | 1.53    | 215                      | 1.54    |
| Total occupied                        | 12797                    | 43.32   | 5916                     | 42.35   |
| Scholars                              | 1877                     | 6.35    | 1862                     | 13.33   |
| Unoccupied                            | 14864                    | 50.32   | 6089                     | 43.59   |

Source: *Census of England and Wales, 1921, County Table for Northumberland* (HMSO, 1923), table 18; *Census of England and Wales, 1931, Occupational Tables* (HMSO, 1934), table 18.

poultry, could also be crucial domestic tasks.<sup>16</sup> A daughter's domestic help could grow in value when other family members were unemployed, especially if the local labour market offered her no opportunity to earn a wage. A range of social surveys found that self-provisioning activities became extremely important in households experiencing long-term unemployment, or which were subject to the household means test, implemented in 1931.<sup>17</sup> Evelyn Haythorne grew up in a South Yorkshire mining village. Her father was unemployed in the mid-1930s. After the Parish Board reduced her family's benefit entitlement due to their maintenance of a vegetable garden, Evelyn helped her mother to sell pie and pea suppers at the weekend:

every available space was filled with meat pies. I looked at them and was a little apprehensive because I knew for certain that if she didn't sell we would have to eat them. Shortly after tea, however, to my amazement and delight, several people came down the path ... My mother and I stayed up very late that night, because most of the people wanted their supper after the pubs had turned out.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> M. Spring Rice, *Working Class Wives* (1981), pp. 163–4.

<sup>17</sup> W. Hannington, *The problem of the distressed areas* (1937), pp. 88–9; Trade Union Congress General Council, 'Organisation of youth', memorandum, 16 Oct. 1935, TUC Archive, MRC, MSS 292/69/18, p. 2; Pilgrim

Trust, *Men without work* (1938), p. 191; C. M. Moehling, 'Women's work and men's unemployment', *JECH* 61 (2001), pp. 928–9.

<sup>18</sup> E. Haythorne, *On Earth to make the numbers up* (1991), pp. 67–8.

The continued presence of unwaged young women in Northumbrian households through the inter-war period demonstrates the value placed upon women's unpaid labour in communities offering them few employment opportunities.

Yet while the inter-war period has been represented as one of increased reliance on male breadwinning, as women returned to 'home and duty',<sup>19</sup> agricultural and mining households could not afford to support a large number of non-earners. This had greater consequences for older children's labour force participation than married women's. Boys could find local employment as miners (34 per cent in 1931), agricultural workers (12 per cent) or messengers and delivery boys (11 per cent), but their wages were not high enough to support their sisters, whose migration to domestic or farm service employment was consequently often essential to the social economy of the rural poor.<sup>20</sup> This movement is partially captured by Table one, although not fully, since the 1921 Census does not provide an age disaggregation of the number of women employed in agriculture by age and county, preventing a comparison of the two Census years. However, across England, farm service accounted for the majority of girls employed in agriculture in both 1921 and 1931, although the proportion of girls thus occupied dropped slightly from 0.5 per cent to 0.4 per cent between these years, and it seems unlikely that Northumberland would have bucked this trend. Of greater importance was residential domestic service. Again, the data presented in Table one are partial, since many residential servants would have been recorded at the household of their employer, and if this was outside their home county they would not have been enumerated by the local census. By providing board and lodging, residential domestic service, like farm service, reduced spatial and financial demands upon overcrowded households. The importance of this during periods of high male unemployment, and the continuing demand for domestic servants, is demonstrated by the decline in the proportion of unoccupied girls and corresponding increase in domestic service employment between 1921 and 1931.

## II

As the preceding discussion suggests, the slight increase in domestic servants nationally between 1921 and 1931 was largely accounted for by young rural women workers responding to the needs of the family economy. Contemporary middle-class anxiety over the lack of domestic servants, which was voiced from the early 1920s, suggests that post-war female urban unemployment did not prevent demand for servants outstripping supply.<sup>21</sup> The expansion in retail and clerical work for young women in urban areas during the 1920s – in Coventry, for example, the proportion of young women employed in retailing increased from 2.0 per cent in 1921 to 6.4 per cent ten years later, while the proportion who were clerical workers rose from 9.9 per cent to 15.0 per cent, increases which were not unusual for more prosperous urban centres – meant that young rural women still constituted a significant proportion of the urban domestic service

<sup>19</sup> Beddoe, *Back to home and duty*, pp. 48–88; J. Giles, *Women, identity and private life in Britain, 1900–50* (1995), pp. 4–5, 48–9.

<sup>20</sup> On the long-term importance of young women's wages to the rural family economy, see S. Horrell and

J. Humphries, 'Women's labour force participation and the transition to the male breadwinner family', *ECHR* 58 (1995), pp. 89–117 and Verdon, 'The rural labour market', pp. 299–323.

<sup>21</sup> *Women's Leader*, 5 Mar. 1924, p. 6.

workforce. Over 70 per cent of Llewellyn Smith's *New Survey of London* 1929 sample of female servants, for example, had been born outside Greater London.<sup>22</sup>

The continuing supply of young rural women for domestic and farm service employment testifies to household need for their wages, and a lack of alternative employment. In the Midlands and south-east of England a socio-economic division opened during the inter-war years, and particularly during the 1930s, between prospering urban centres and large pockets of rural poverty. Even in northern counties, rural labour markets often contrasted unfavourably with those of urban areas, particularly for young workers, who were not as susceptible to long-term urban unemployment as their fathers. Elizabeth Roberts has suggested that by the early twentieth century, former domestic servants in urban Lancashire were determined that their daughters would secure different, higher status employment, although choice was still extremely limited.<sup>23</sup> But in rural areas, alternative job opportunities remained scarce into the 1930s. Recruitment to domestic or farm service was automatic in many areas throughout the 1920s. One woman from Oxfordshire who entered employment in the early post-war years recalled that, 'on the last day at Goring school the local gentry came round and offered jobs. My first job was as a between maid'.<sup>24</sup> Kinship was extremely significant in occupational recruitment. Mothers were particularly influential in finding and, despite the paucity of vacancies, vetting jobs for their daughters. Mrs Hevness, who grew up in a Nottinghamshire village, began her working life as servant to the local shopkeeper's family.<sup>25</sup> Mrs Cleary, who grew up in a village outside Manchester, benefited from post-war economic expansion in the city by obtaining a job as a confectioner, but at the age of 15, in 1922, ill-health cost her this job. Subsequently, her mother found her a post as a domestic servant by asking the family doctor.<sup>26</sup> Some mothers viewed domestic service as a secure and respectable occupation. Marion Kent, who grew up in a Derbyshire village, could have travelled daily to a local town for factory employment, but her mother considered this 'rough', and was keen to have her daughter placed in a large country house which would offer respectable, secure employment with scope for promotion.<sup>27</sup> The paternalistic nature of domestic service was demonstrated by employers' widespread requirement that prospective servants were accompanied to interviews by their mothers, so that their social background, trustworthiness and cleanliness could be assessed.<sup>28</sup> Married women's role as household managers in rural districts was more wide-ranging than previous assessments have suggested, with the family, but particularly the mother, being instrumental in shaping daughters' labour force participation.

The traditional career path which Marion Kent's mother desired for her daughter was declining by the 1920s, and continued to do so over the inter-war years. Demand for very young servants diminished during the 1920s, with the number of servants under the age of 16 falling

<sup>22</sup> H. Llewellyn Smith, *New survey of London life and labour* (9 vols, 1930–5), II, p. 429.

<sup>23</sup> Roberts, *Woman's place*, pp. 64–5.

<sup>24</sup> Oxfordshire Federation of Women's Institutes, *Oxfordshire within living memory* (1994), p. 145.

<sup>25</sup> NLSL, MEMC, A78/a-c/1, interview with Mrs Hevness.

<sup>26</sup> TLSL, MSC, tape 28, interview with Mrs Cleary. See also ESRO, Lewes, AMS 6416/1/6/13, interview with Joan Whitfield.

<sup>27</sup> LRO, NWSA, 1988.0060, audio-cassette recording of interview with Marion Kent.

<sup>28</sup> LRO, NWSA, 1988.0060. See also TLSL, MSC, tape 28; TLSL, MSC, tape 26, interview with Mrs Hughson.

from 82,014 in 1921 to 73,789 in 1931, a decrease of over 10 per cent which cannot be entirely explained by the raising of the school leaving age from 12 to 14 in 1921, nor by the availability of alternative employment for school leavers. In 1923 a Ministry of Labour investigation found that:

There is evidence that a large number of girls of 14, especially in rural areas, are desirous of taking up domestic service ... but that very few employers are prepared to engage such young, inexperienced girls, with the result that they drift off into other occupations, become accustomed to the conditions of industrial life, and at 16 or 17 it is very difficult to redirect their thoughts to domestic work.<sup>29</sup>

The London Advisory Council on Juvenile Employment found the same preference for girls aged sixteen or older among employers in the late 1920s, and this continued to be noted throughout the 1930s.<sup>30</sup>

This demographic change was largely due to changes in labour demand for servants. The decline of the landed gentry, and the type of service work Marion Kent's mother wished her daughter to enter, was matched by increasing demand for servants by smaller, urban middle-class households. By the 1930s, the most common form of employment for servants was in such households which, as the *New London Survey* found, employed a single maid of all work and preferred, for this reason, women in their mid or later teens to younger girls.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, while kinship remained an important means of occupational recruitment, employment agencies, and state-run Juvenile Employment Bureaux, established in 1910, were increasingly used to obtain jobs distant from home and outside kinship networks.

Simultaneously, farm service was declining as an employer of young rural women. In 1921, agriculture employed 1.2 per cent of the young female workforce; ten years later, that figure had dropped below one per cent. In East Sussex, where agriculture employed 20.8 per cent of men and 17.8 per cent of juvenile boys, only 0.6 per cent of girls were thus employed in 1931. Almost 50 per cent of young women employed in agriculture were categorised as farm servants in 1931, a total of 9101. This figure is probably an underestimation, since the wide variety of work demanded of farm servants meant that many in rural counties like Sussex were likely to be recorded under other agricultural occupations, or outside the sector altogether, as domestic servants. In 1930, Winifred Foley was employed as a 'domestic' servant on a mid-Wales farm, but she also helped the farmer, his wife and nephew to run the business.<sup>32</sup>

Familial recruitment was still very significant in agricultural work. Howkins has pointed to the continued importance of family hiring in the Border regions of England and Scotland, including Northumberland, into the inter-war years. Of even greater, and more general, importance was the hiring of near and distant relatives to work on the farm.<sup>33</sup> In 1921 5420 young women were recorded as farmers' relatives, accounting for 18 per cent of those employed in agriculture; ten years later, this number had fallen to 4077, but they now accounted for

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Labour, *Report of the committee appointed to enquire into the present conditions as to the supply of female domestic servants* (1923), p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> London Advisory Council for Juvenile Employment, *A guide to employment for London boys*

and girls (1928), p. 103. On the 1930s, see R. Strachey, *Careers and openings for women* (1935), p. 110.

<sup>31</sup> Llewellyn Smith, *New survey*, VIII, p. 315.

<sup>32</sup> W. Foley, *The Forest Trilogy* (1992), pp. 146–9.

<sup>33</sup> Howkins, *Death of rural England*, pp. 78–80.

22 per cent. This sometimes represented a continuation of 'classic farm service', particularly in some northern and Welsh counties, whereby young workers, frequently the children of farmers themselves, were hired for a long period of living-in, frequently taking meals with the farmer's family and undertaking a wide variety of tasks. However, this form of service was already declining by the late nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> Of greater significance as an explanation of the notable proportion of female agricultural workers who were related to their employer in the 1930s is agricultural depression. Farmers were increasingly unable to afford to employ non-family members during the inter-war years. The proportion of hired workers to family members continued to fall through the 1930s, when the agricultural workforce declined faster than in any previous decade, and by 1939, almost 44 per cent of agricultural holdings did not employ regular workers.<sup>35</sup> The decline of farm service and of domestic service within wealthy, rural households and farms meant that the ties which Edward Higgs traced in late nineteenth century between domestic and farm service, based upon familial connections between servant and employer or upon a supportive network of other servants in the household, had almost entirely disappeared by the later 1930s.<sup>36</sup>

These changes contributed to a reduction in both demand for and supply of young female farm servants. In southern England demand for farm servants had been sharply declining since the nineteenth century: family hiring was infrequent by the beginning of the twentieth century in many southern counties, and fruit and vegetable production, increasingly common in the south-east, did not demand the services of residential farm servants to the extent that was true of larger cereal or dairy farms further north. In some northern counties young women continued to find employment as farm servants, on year-long contracts, at hiring fairs. However, the system of family hiring was sharply declining by the 1930s, reducing the incentive for girls to remain in the parental home after leaving school, and for parents to maintain them there. Moreover, the effect of agricultural depression, in reducing demand for long-term farm servants in those northern areas where this form of employment had survived the First World War, made such employment increasingly unattractive to young women and their parents. Domestic service, by contrast, could offer secure work with some promotion prospects.

Information about the working conditions of servants is limited, since their employment was not regulated and therefore not subject to the scrutiny of Ministry of Labour investigations into wages and working hours. The particular paucity of data on farm servants reflects the urban and industrial focus of most contemporary studies. While the Agricultural Wages Board set wages between 1917 and 1939 (1921–4 excepted), wages were not nationally uniform even if the minimum was paid.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, personal testimonies are the most valuable source of information, although it is impossible to generalise from these, since farm servants' hours and conditions clearly varied greatly. Most, like Winifred Foley, seem to have worked from dawn until late evening, although their workload could vary according to the season.<sup>38</sup> Seasons did not significantly affect domestic servants in non-farming households, but their workload was

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 78–9.

<sup>35</sup> J. Martin, *The development of modern agriculture: British farming since 1931* (2000), p. 21; A. Armstrong, *Farmworkers: a social and economic history, 1770–1880* (1988), p. 201.

<sup>36</sup> E. Higgs, 'Domestic service and household production', in A. V. John (ed.), *Unequal opportunities: Women's employment in England, 1800–1918* (1986), pp. 133–6.

<sup>37</sup> Howkins, *Death of rural England*, p. 83.

<sup>38</sup> Foley, *Child*, pp. 145–6.

also heavy: the *Social Survey of Merseyside* found that servants' weekly hours ranged from 57.0 to 68.5 hours, with a median of 62 hours per week.<sup>39</sup> As Winifred Foley commented, most employers 'needed a creature that would run on very little fuel and would not question her lot'.<sup>40</sup> Junior maids often worked the longest hours: Marion Kent's first job required her to work almost continuously between 6.30am and 10pm. However, the conditions of servants in wealthy households employing large staffs seem to have been slightly better regulated than those of young women working in smaller, single servant households. Marion Kent did benefit from a proper teatime, and from a weekly half-holiday, and this seems to have been typical of servants in larger households.<sup>41</sup> Mrs Halliday, who was expected to act as children's nurse, as well as cleaner and cook, to the country doctor's family for whom she worked in Yorkshire in the early 1930s, is representative of many servants in smaller, single-servant households.<sup>42</sup> The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) admitted that the long working hours and limitations to workers' liberty were compelling disadvantages for domestic workers.<sup>43</sup>

Domestic servants' wages were consistently lower than those of industrial or clerical employees. A survey of juveniles' wages undertaken by the Ministry of Labour in 1929 indicated that young women aged between eighteen and twenty could expect to earn about 20s. per week in an office or factory, while boys could expect about 22s. Yet the *Social Survey of Merseyside* and the *New London Survey* found that in the early 1930s, the average weekly wage for domestic servants between 18 and 20 years of age was 11s. 6d. on Merseyside and for servants aged between 18 and 21 in London.<sup>44</sup> Wages tended to be higher in large, wealthy households than in smaller farming households or middle class urban homes. Marion Kent earned just under 10s. 0d. per week in her first job as a 16 year old maid to a wealthy Derbyshire family in 1933,<sup>45</sup> while Mrs Halliday, who took up her first post in a smaller, middle-class household at the same age and time, earned half this,<sup>46</sup> as did Nora Holyroyd.<sup>47</sup> Wages were, however, supplemented by board and lodging, and it was this which made the occupation suitable for young women from rural communities unable to offer them local employment.

Entering employment marked the beginning of financial independence for young women. While young workers were generally expected to hand over their wage packet to their mothers as a contribution to the family economy, most received a small proportion of weekly spending money in return. Historians have pointed to this as evidence of young wage-earners' increasing ability to engage in commercial leisure pursuits, as cinema and dance hall provision increased.<sup>48</sup> While servants' wages were small, many exercised some personal autonomy over their pay. The continuance of 'living in' meant that young women tended to leave the parental home far earlier than their brothers in those rural areas, such as Northumberland or the Forest of Dean, where there were few opportunities for female employment. The degree of personal

<sup>39</sup> D. Caradog Jones, *Social survey of Merseyside* (3 vols, 1934), II, p. 316.

<sup>40</sup> Foley, *Child*, p. 140.

<sup>41</sup> LRO, NWSA, 1988.0060. See also J. Rennie, *Every other sunday* (1955), pp. 31–2.

<sup>42</sup> LRO, NWSA, 1999.0088.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in J. Gollan, *Youth in British industry* (1937), p. 114.

<sup>44</sup> Caradog Jones, *Social survey*, II, p. 311, and Llewellyn Smith, *New survey*, II, p. 468.

<sup>45</sup> LRO, NWSA, 1988.0090.

<sup>46</sup> LRO, NWSA, 1999.0088.

<sup>47</sup> LRO, NWSA, 2000.0651A, recorded interview with Nora Holyroyd.

<sup>48</sup> D. Fowler, *The first teenagers* (1995), p. 1.

independence that this offered them was enhanced by a change in payment methods: while in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, employers of domestic and farm servants had often sent their workers' wages directly to their parents, giving the servant a few pennies for weekly pocket money, by the 1920s, servants were usually responsible for sending their wage packet to their mother themselves, after deducting an appropriate amount of pocket money from it.<sup>49</sup>

Yet despite this, residential servants had extremely limited financial independence. The level of young workers' spending money was determined by their wages and the demands of the family economy; the poverty experienced by many rural households left little extra cash for personal spending money. Economic recovery meant that in 1936, Bowley calculated that the average income of working-class families was 76s. *od.*, including a margin of 20s. *od.* for non-essential expenditure, which increased leisure and luxury consumption.<sup>50</sup> This was not, however, the case in rural districts. In 1937 Rowntree calculated that a rural family with three children would require 41s. *od.* per week for bare subsistence, but the weekly wage of ordinary agricultural workers was just 35s. 3*d.*<sup>51</sup> Consequently, many households continued to rely on the contributions of young wage-earners to meet basic needs right up until the eve of the Second World War. Commercial leisure consumption, and the development of a commercialised youth culture, were, then, largely confined to urban areas. Frances Fuller, who grew up in Lewes, East Sussex, recalled that:

I used to roam the hills ... because I had no money. I was the eldest and when I first went out to work my mother took all the cash, so I had nothing. And read. Belonged to a library and read.<sup>52</sup>

This had significant consequences for gendered roles in rural society. While gender did not significantly fracture youthful leisure consumption in urban areas, young rural women often experienced far more limited financial and social independence than their brothers in areas where young men could obtain industrial work while young women aided their mothers with domestic duties, or entered poorly paid residential service. The non-cash benefits of service employment partially compensated for this; some servants, like Edith Edwards, saw the provision of board and lodging and their limited access to leisure as an advantage, noting that they were able to save more than other young workers.<sup>53</sup> This trend dated back to the nineteenth century, and enabled them to offer more help to the parental home, or to save for marriage.<sup>54</sup> It encouraged these young women to look to marriage, rather than to their leisure consumption, as a means of personal fulfilment.

But while some important continuities in employment patterns and household relations can be traced between the pre- and post-First World War decades, significant changes were also

<sup>49</sup> See for example NLSL, MEMC, A78/a/1, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> A. L. Bowley, *Wages and Income in the United Kingdom since 1860* (1937), p. 39.

<sup>51</sup> B. S. Rowntree, *The human needs of labour* (1937), p. 106.

<sup>52</sup> ESRO, Lewes, interview with Frances Fuller, AMS 6416/1/7/45.

<sup>53</sup> TLSL, MSC, tape no. 607, interview with Edith Edwards.

<sup>54</sup> B. Lemire, "Manly character" and "practical wisdom": saving and social discipline in nineteenth-century England', paper presented at the Economic History Society Annual Conference, 6 Apr. 2002.

occurring. Changes in labour demand exacerbated young women's migration from rural areas, although patterns varied according to locality. The high proportion of young women employed as domestic servants in Sussex testified to the large number of elderly, relatively wealthy householders, and private schools and nursing homes in the county. Furthermore, suburbia and commuting were beginning to change the composition of rural communities in the south-east and to provide 'places' for young women close to home by the 1930s.<sup>55</sup> As the borders between rural and urban communities became increasingly blurred in such areas, so young women's horizons expanded beyond their village, or even the local county town. Yet in other areas, such as Northumberland, or South Wales, long-distance migration increasingly characterised the employment pathways of young women whose local employment opportunities were extremely limited. Young rural women were, then, important in social and economic developments within the countryside, but also in rural depopulation, examined in more detail in the following section.

However, by the later 1930s, demand for young, residential servants was declining. By the mid-1930s, small households, offices and institutions were increasingly recruiting older women to undertake daily, part time cleaning jobs, rather than younger, full-time servants.<sup>56</sup> While the Census does not distinguish between residential and daily servants, a substantial rise in the number of charwomen and cleaners was recorded between 1921 and 1931; only 6 per cent of them were aged between 14 and 24 in 1931. The period 1918 to 1939, but particularly the 1930s, thus witnessed the decline of the occupation which had characterised the youth of many rural women for more than a century. The impact which the emergence of alternative forms of employment had upon this trend, and upon young women workers' own aspirations, is the subject of the final section of this article.

### III

While the decline in the importance of domestic and farm service as occupations for young women was partly due to changes in labour demand, it was also caused by their own determination not to enter service if alternative work was available. Expanding labour demand in the retail and industrial sectors facilitated mobility out of poorly paid domestic and farm work by the mid-1930s. Retail employment was particularly significant for young women in or near country towns or larger villages. In 1911 190,124 women accounted for 36.6 per cent of all shop assistants, but by 1931, 394,531 women were so employed, constituting almost 50 per cent of all assistants, and 258,497 young women, almost 10 per cent of young women workers, were thus occupied. Trade depression in the early 1930s, which particularly affected shopkeepers in rural and mining areas, led many to cut wage costs by employing young women, rather than men who would be eligible for a higher wage. While gender differentials in juvenile wages appear to have been very slight, they became significant from the late teens. In addition, young women were likely to give up full time paid work when they married, and were thus unlikely to be employed on the full, adult women's wage rate for very long.

Girls welcomed the opportunity for local, relatively well paid employment which these

<sup>55</sup> Howkins, *Death of rural England*, p. 93.

<sup>56</sup> Llewellyn Smith, *New survey*, VIII (ii), p. 315.

changes offered. Linda McCullough Thew, who became a shop assistant in her home town of Ashington after leaving school in the early 1930s, was aware that just ten years earlier domestic service would have been the only employment open to her, and welcomed the additional freedom but also her ability to make a substantial contribution to the family home from her wages.<sup>57</sup> The economic recovery of the mid-1930s increased local opportunities for retail work, and for clerical employment in urban areas within daily travelling distance, raising the value of young women to the household. Edith Edwards, who grew up near Macclesfield, had no choice of occupation except domestic service in 1929, but her sister 'was 10 years younger than me, and times had changed by the time she left school – and – she went into a shop in Knutsford'.<sup>58</sup> Joan Perry, who lived in the rural town of Lewes, Sussex, also became a shop assistant when she left school in 1939, and felt more fortunate than her older sisters, who had entered domestic service 'because that was the only thing then, you had to go'.<sup>59</sup> Domestic service remained the largest employer of Northumberland's young women until the Second World War, and this was also true of many other rural areas, but employment patterns were gradually changing from the beginning of the 1930s, stimulated by depression and then by economic expansion.

This gradual exodus from domestic and farm service in and around England's growth towns meant that demand for servants greatly outstripped supply from the late 1920s as middle-class women's magazines and periodicals testify. This shaped the government's treatment of young women's unemployment. Little attention has been paid to youth unemployment by historians, but it in fact greatly affected a small but significant minority of young women in depressed, rural areas. Throughout the inter-war years, the depressed areas of north-west England's textile communities and the coalfields of Wales and north east England accounted for over three quarters of the juvenile unemployed. In 1930, 1.8 per cent of 16 and 17 year old insured girls and 3.8 per cent of insured boys in London were unemployed, but the comparable figures for north-east England were 7.8 per cent and 6.8 per cent.<sup>60</sup> These figures are probably an underestimate. Young people under the age of sixteen were ineligible for benefit prior to 1934, and thus lacked any incentive to register as unemployed. After a 1922 ruling by the Court of Referees, those young women who were otherwise eligible for benefit were rendered ineligible if they refused to take up a position in domestic service. In addition, entering domestic service rendered workers ineligible for future insurance contributions and meant that many former domestic servants did not register as unemployed.

By the late 1920s, increasing concern to remedy a regional mismatch of labour demand and supply led the Ministry of Labour to make labour mobility a central element of youth unemployment policy. Consequently, juveniles and women were included in an official labour transference scheme established in 1928.<sup>61</sup> While this scheme has often been seen as a new departure, it in fact relied on the existing migratory pattern of young rural women, whose employment in residential domestic service had long meant that many left home at the age of fourteen. It also extended a policy approach first utilised in the immediate First World War

<sup>57</sup> Thew, *Pit Village*, pp. 123–4.

<sup>58</sup> TLSL, MSC, tape no. 36.

<sup>59</sup> ESRO, Lewes, AMS 6416/1/7/51, interview with Joan Perry.

<sup>60</sup> Ministry of Labour, *Report on juvenile employment*

*for the year 1934* (Cmd 4861, 1934–5), p. 10.

<sup>61</sup> Ministry of Labour, *Memorandum on the shortage, surplus and redistribution of juvenile labour in England and Wales during the years 1930–1938* (1931), p. 4.

years. Attempts to broaden the recruitment of domestic servants had been initiated through the Central Committee for Women's Training and Employment (CCWTE), funded by the Ministry of Labour, from 1921. In 1921–22 over 10,000 women and girls, a large proportion from the north-east coalfield, were given training to assist them to return to or enter residential domestic service, or to prepare them for transition from worker to full time housewife;<sup>62</sup> similar numbers were trained in subsequent years until the mid-1930s. Ministry of Labour officials were clearly less concerned with the skills young women learnt in domestic service than with reducing unemployment as quickly and easily as possible. The scheme to send rural women into domestic service was a relatively easy means of achieving this without interfering greatly in the operation of the labour market.

The labour transference scheme introduced in 1928 had different aims to this earlier policy. While the CCWTE initiative was primarily intended to reduce the number of unemployed women without tampering very much with the relationship between labour and capital, the labour transference scheme aimed to speed up and increase the transference of young people, and in so doing to ease and subsidise industrial growth. It was chiefly aimed at transferring young people and juveniles from the coalfields and agricultural districts of South Wales, Durham, Lanarkshire and Northumberland to towns in the south and midlands of England. While adult men constituted the largest group of transferees, juveniles and women (usually under 25 years of age) constituted 54 per cent of transferees between 1928 and 1938, and more girls than boys were transferred, particularly during the early 1930s. Each participant was guaranteed a job with 'prospects' of permanent employment, wages not below the local juvenile average, lodgings, and 'after care'. Little welfare provision was made for young adults, although all transferees were guaranteed one return fare home.<sup>63</sup>

This scheme exacerbated existing migratory patterns. By 1934, 77.1 per cent of young women transferees came from the north-east of England and Wales, with only a small proportion coming from the north-west, largely because of the prevalence of short time and underemployment, rather than unemployment, in the latter region, but also because of the longer tradition of young women's migration from the north-east and Welsh coalfields and rural districts. Some existing migration patterns were utilised; for example, a large number of young women from Welsh villages were sent into domestic service in Oxford and Bristol.<sup>64</sup>

While the labour transference scheme clearly played a significant role in supplying subsidised labour to growth industries, thus lowering their production costs, the experience of young women transferees indicates that this was not its only consequence. Despite the promotion of opportunities in the new industries by Ministry of Labour publicity, young women were not transferred into industrial work until 1931 and 87 per cent of girls transferred between 1928 and 1935 were placed in domestic service positions.<sup>65</sup> All adult women transferred – usually young and single – were placed in domestic service. The labour transference scheme was clearly prompted not only by a concern to match labour supply with demand in the new industries, but also to reduce

<sup>62</sup> Central Committee on Women's Training and Employment, *Second interim report for the period ending 31st December 1922* (1923), p. 8.

<sup>63</sup> A short outline of the scheme is included in Ministry of Labour, *Report on juvenile employment for*

*the year 1934* (Cmd 4861, 1935), p. 11.

<sup>64</sup> Bristol Advisory Committee for Juvenile Employment, *Annual report for the year 1930* (1931), p. 5.

<sup>65</sup> Ministry of Labour, *Annual report for the year 1933* (Cmd 4860, 1934–5), p. 55.

the unemployment figures by supplying domestic servants to households in those areas where local young women were increasingly taking up better paid factory employment. Prior to the mid-1930s, it sustained a declining occupation characterised by low pay and low status.

This government scheme failed to fill the demand for servants with young rural women. It was not until 1936 that more girls were placed in industrial work than domestic employment,<sup>66</sup> reflecting slow industrial growth. However, the labour transference scheme indirectly encouraged the existing movement from domestic service to retail, clerical or waitressing work. Increasingly, entering domestic service in a large urban area was viewed by young women as a temporary stop-gap while they found more lucrative and congenial employment in factory, shop or café.<sup>67</sup> As a commercialised youth culture began to develop in Britain's cities, and employment opportunities on farms or in rural households declined in number and security, the attraction of migrating to the cities grew. This trend was already discernible between 1921 and 1931, when the decrease in the number of domestic servants aged under 16 corresponded with a rise in the number of waitresses of this age, from 1242 in 1921 to 1833 in 1931, a rise of 47.6 per cent, and of shop assistants from 27,618 to 31,141, an increase of 12.8 per cent. Social surveys indicate that this trend accelerated in the 1930s. In Liverpool, for example, servants increasingly transferred to retail employment from the late 1920s.<sup>68</sup> By the mid-1930s this pattern of mobility was well established. Winifred Foley, for example, eventually became a chambermaid in a London guest house in the mid-1930s, which allowed her more freedom than residential service in a private household, and she subsequently became a waitress.

This represented an acceleration in the migration patterns of young rural women, which had begun to attain significance prior to the First World War. The evidence presented above supports Hill's assertion that young, single women constituted an extremely important group of rural migrants in modern England.<sup>69</sup> Young women migrated at an earlier age than men, and the gender differential in outward migration from rural districts increased over the inter-war years. As Savage's data on 1911 and 1951 highlight, the female/male ratio began to diverge from the national norm from the age of 15. In 1911 the ratio for England and Wales for 15–20 year olds stood at 102, but at 86 in rural districts, a marked drop in the ratio for school-age juveniles. In 1951 this trend had increased, with the ratio recorded as 105 for England and Wales, but 71 for rural areas.<sup>70</sup> This reflected the growing significance of young women as a proportion of migrants from rural areas, a movement which the evidence above has demonstrated did not simply reflect the immediate consequences of the two World Wars, but rather developed over the inter-war period. While job opportunities were increasing for young women in rural areas by the mid-1930s, the attractions of urban life were clearly also being heightened by employment expansion and the growth of commercialised leisure. The decline of domestic service as an employer of young, rural women in inter-war England thus marked the beginnings of new patterns of migration, rather than its cessation, and denoted a new development in the relationship between country and town.

<sup>66</sup> *Ministry of Labour Gazette* 46 (1936), p. 418.

<sup>67</sup> P. Scott, 'The State, internal migration, and the growth of new industrial communities in inter-war Britain', *English Historical Rev.*, 115 (2000), p. 345.

<sup>68</sup> Caradog Jones, *Merseyside*, II, p. 302.

<sup>69</sup> Hill, 'Rural-urban Migration', p. 186.

<sup>70</sup> Saville, *Rural Depopulation*, p. 116.

## IV

The employment experiences of rural young women in inter-war England qualify existing representations of inter-war youth, which are largely based upon urban communities. Youth was differentiated by location, and in rural areas the 1920s and 1930s was less markedly a period of affluence and leisure. This was largely because of the depressed rural economy, which maintained young women's importance as household breadwinners throughout the inter-war years. The economic value of supplementary earners in fact escalated in those rural communities hit hard by male unemployment. The rise in domestic service employment in the late 1920s and early 1930s indicates that young women's labour force participation was governed by familial need, and could be crucial in preventing a family falling below the poverty line. Servants did not, on the whole, experience the decline in working hours, and consequent greater access to leisure time, which workers in other sectors benefited from during the 1930s. The experiences of these young women thus qualify optimistic assessments of the inter-war period as one of smooth economic growth.

However, young women were also agents of socio-economic change in inter-war rural communities, and as such provide an insight into the changing relationship between town and country in inter-war England. They were in demand as single servants among middle-class householders in suburban areas, and increasingly in the retail sector which expanded to cater for the needs of the communities developing on the outskirts of towns and cities. This diminished the supply of domestic servants, and meant that young women were the constituency most likely to bring elements of commercialised leisure and youth culture into rural communities, providing a market for retail services, cinemas and dance halls. These young women were also the section of the community most likely to migrate to urban districts. It was not until the mid-1930s that economic expansion was sufficient to offer young rural women industrial employment away from home. More significant was the expansion in retail and waitressing employment in urban communities as young women resident in towns and cities increasingly left these low-paying jobs to work in better-paying factories and offices. The difference in commercial leisure consumption between town and country contributed to a perceived cultural difference between the two which heightened the attraction of urban living for young workers. While a labour transference scheme facilitated this change in young women's migration patterns, it is also evident that young rural women's own determination to leave the long hours, low pay and limited independence of domestic and farm service shaped a transformation in their employment patterns, and the composition of rural communities. However, the attraction of these young women for employers across the increasingly varied range of jobs they entered remained their low cost and disposability. Consequently, their employment continued to reinforce their position as dependants upon, if not within, the parental household, limiting the social and financial independence with which youth was increasingly becoming associated.

# Annual list of articles on Agrarian History, 2002<sup>\*</sup>

Compiled by Janet Collett  
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- ADAIR, W. D., 'Can we trust the census reports? Lessons from a study of domestic servants in Tenbury, Worcestershire 1851 and 1861', *Family and Community Hist.*, 5, pp. 99–110.
- ALBERRO, M., 'Celtic Galicia? Ancient connections and similarities in the traditions, superstitions and folklore of the Cornish peninsular and Galicia, Spain', *Cornish Studies*, 9 (2001), pp. 13–44.
- ALLEN, DAVID, 'The descent of the manor of Ampners in Thrandeston', *Procs. Suffolk Inst. Arch. and Hist.*, 40, pp. 145–50.
- ALLEN, ROBERT C., 'Revolución en los campos: la reinterpretación de la revolución agrícola inglesa', *Historia Agraria*, 26, pp. 13–32. [Revolution in the fields: reinterpreting the English agricultural revolution].
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- AMOS, DENISE, 'The "Good old days" – the Victorian and Edwardian working class diet in Nottingham', *Trans. Thornton Soc.*, 106, pp. 127–44.
- ANBINDER, TYLER, 'From famine to five points: Lord Lansdowne's Irish tenants encounter North America's most notorious slum', *American Hist. Rev.*, 107, pp. 350–87.
- ANDERSON, MICHAEL, 'Population growth and population regulation in nineteenth-century rural Scotland', in Bengtsson and Saito (eds), *Population and economy*, pp. 111–31.
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- BAKER, JOHN HAMILTON, 'Oral instruction in land law and conveyancing, 1250–1500', in Bush and Wijffels (eds), *Learning the law*, pp. 157–73.
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## Book Reviews

### Britain and Ireland

WILLIAM P. L. THOMSON, *The new history of Orkney* (Mercat Press, sec. edn, 2001). xii + 529 pp. 108 maps and illus. £14.99.

William Thomson's revised *History of Orkney* (first published in 1987) spans the history of the islands from the Iron Age to the twentieth century and is a model of what a local history should be. Lucid, comprehensive and interesting, it exemplifies the value of local studies, particularly when the locality is an independent cultural unit like a group of islands. As all historians and anthropologists know, islands are very interesting sociological entities, especially when they are distinctive and populous enough to have their own cultural identity. In Orkney's case this identity is mirrored in a very long-lived aristocratic title, originating as a Viking *jarldom*, in a self-sufficient agricultural community and in a well-organized urban mercantile oligarchy in Kirkwall.

These islands lie at the northern end of the British Isles, and along with Shetland came under the influence and control of Norway in the early middle ages. The earls of Orkney are the epitome of the islands' Norse character, established as Viking warlords, and using the islands as a base for harrying and raiding the Christian kingdoms to the south of them. Their own saga still survives and provides a remarkable early account of their deeds and dynastic struggles. They imprinted Norse speech and culture on their island empire and created a Scandinavian colony which retained its ethnic identity into the early modern period. The problem is, however, that the brilliance of this aristocratic fiefdom (which acquired its own saintly dynastic martyr and built a cathedral for his resting-place which has survived better than any other Scottish cathedral) overshadows the rest of Orkney's history. Previous Orkney historians have had difficulty breaking free of this mould, tending to see the Norse period as the apogee of Orkney's cultural past and the following centuries as one long slow decline. The social and economic peculiarities which give these islands their own particular character, different from the rest of Scotland, were explained as traces of earlier Norse administrative methods, and older historians attempted

to stress the Norseness of all Orkney's agrarian phenomena. The particular value of Thomson's writings, as a geographer with wide knowledge of economic and agricultural change, is that he understands the post-Norse period to be of interest in its own right, with its own hybrid blend of Norwegian/Scottish culture. In fact his *History* takes the reader right up to the post-war period more comprehensively than any previous study of Orkney history.

Orkney is therefore fortunate to have a local historian (the author has taught geography in the secondary schools of both Orkney and Shetland) with the particular expertise to understand and explain the sometimes complex economic and fiscal organizations which different social systems have introduced in the islands. This is one of the most interesting historical aspects of the fertile Orkneys which consist of mostly low-lying beds of Old Red Sandstone capable of producing arable crops far beyond the normal output of grain-growing cultivation in the north of Scotland. This feature has made them exceedingly attractive possessions to Iron-Age Picts, Norse Vikings, medieval churchmen, Scots colonists, and improving landowners. Each layer of landlord power has left traces of its land assessment units or agricultural methodology in document, place-name or landscape feature. The author commands all the evidence, whether it is the complex excavated remains of the Pictish period; the complexities of the Norse fiscal assessment system and the taxing and renting of land in medieval Orkney; the introduction of a new form of feudal tenure after the Reformation; the actualities of runrig arrangements; the different phases of agricultural improvement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the changes wrought by it on the face of the islands; the merchant-lairds and the kelp-boom (about which he has written a whole book); or the effects of war in the twentieth century when the Orkney islands became a front-line military zone.

There can be few areas of Scotland which reveal so much about the past in the present landscape. Ranging from the magnificent prehistoric monuments – the main sites of which now form a World Heritage Site – to the medieval cathedral of St. Magnus, to the wrecks

of the scuttled German fleet in Scapa Flow, these are the product of the fertile land and of the nodal position which these islands occupy at the northern tip of Britain. Such features in the landscape can only be fully appreciated by the visitor with an understanding of the historical circumstances. Thomson's *New history of Orkney* explains these and places them in context. It also puts the historical issues into context, by explaining the arguments and controversies, whether they are to do with the violence or otherwise of the Viking settlement, the value or otherwise of the saga of the earls, the existence or otherwise of the *udal* system of land tenure, and from more recent history, the effects of the various phases of agricultural improvement. Moreover, this revised version is a *new* history of Orkney, much of it reworked since its 1987 predecessor, with new chapters added, particularly on the early period, incorporating excellent discussions of work which has appeared since then. Additionally, the illustrations are transformed from 42 to 108 maps and photos. There can be few localities and very few indeed in Scotland, which have such a valuable overview of their history.

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PHILLIPP R. SCHOFIELD, *Peasant and community in medieval England, 1200–1500* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). vii + 279 pp. £55 (hbk); £19.99 (pbk).

The study of medieval peasants has been so active a field of medieval social history in recent decades that it is hardly surprising the topic repays an extensive and careful review. Phillipp Schofield's book, designed to be read as an introductory text to the subject, will also be valuable for readers wanting an up-to-date survey of current research. He discusses succinctly, in three chapters, the large body of evidence relating to rural tenures, whose distinguished historiography goes back to the later nineteenth century, before going on to consider more recent areas of interest. Another three chapters are devoted to what is known about peasant families, in which age at marriage, household size, and the wider responsibilities associated with kinship are all explored. Three further chapters examine the relationship between peasant societies and commercial, political and religious institutions. These last three topics Schofield classifies as relationships between peasants and 'worlds beyond', so emphasizing the extent to which the medieval rural communities were open to both stimuli and pressures from outside.

Inevitably, given the large proportion of the English population under discussion, the book has to deal with a diversity of experience that defies easy generalizations. However, progress in this area of research has often

involved undermining generalized fallacies about medieval peasants and their ways: to demonstrate the diversity to be found through the documents has in itself myth-breaking potential so that even negative conclusions can be informative. However, Schofield's prevailing emphasis is a positive one, contrasting strongly with some pessimistic traditions of the past; he demonstrates the extent to which peasants understood their environment, adapted to change, and responded actively to the challenges and opportunities they encountered. The contribution of peasant farmers to the growth of output and trade in agricultural produce is a major case in point, supported by interesting and well-chosen examples. There are predictably helpful comments on rural credit, the peasant land market and litigation, topics with which Schofield's name is particularly associated. The book has interesting comments on practical understanding of legal procedure within rural society, and on the extent to which ordinary countrymen were aware of political events. Even in matters of religion, where there were severe institutional constraints on what lay people could and could not do, Schofield shows how the establishment of parishes encouraged peasant involvement, and he discusses the range of different ways through which peasant piety could be expressed both privately and collectively. In all these discussions he is well aware of the scope for rivalry and oppression internal to peasant society, given the considerable inequalities of wealth and status to be found there.

The condition of the peasantry did not remain unchanged through the three centuries under consideration, even if economic development was slow by modern standards. Underlying the analyses of peasant society, the book subsumes the familiar dynamic outlines of demographic, commercial, legal and political changes that affected the environment in which rural livelihoods could be gained. The need to incorporate change over time makes for complexity in Chapters 2 to 4 concerning the land, in which regional differences, legal distinctions and social categories also struggle for space. A student approaching peasant society for the first time will have to study these pages particularly closely to gain a firm grasp of the issues. Later chapters pose fewer complications, and can consequently be read more easily. Throughout the book, the analysis is invariably up-to-date. Where the offered interpretation is controversial, the facts in question are sufficiently unclear to justify whole research programmes. It is not as obvious as Schofield implies, for example, that the proportion of the population dependent upon wage labour increased through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The evidence of population, wages and tenures might rather be

interpreted to imply that proletarianization in the countryside declined through this period. But arguments either way have yet to be posed effectively and properly tested.

Besides the interest of its text, a further advantage of the book is the assistance the author gives to those wanting to develop their knowledge of the subject. Each chapter is well annotated, with references to an extensive range of sources. In addition, there is an excellent eight-page annotated bibliography, clearly demarcated by subject area. The book is usefully indexed both by names and the subjects discussed.

RICHARD BRITNELL  
*University of Durham*

SAMANTHA LETTERS, MARIO FERNANDES, DEREK KEENE and OLWEN MYHILL, *Gazetteer of markets and fairs in England and Wales to 1516* (List and Index Society, Special Series 32 and 33, 2003). 529 pp. £36 to non-members. Available from the Society, c/o The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU.

In this work, Samantha Letters and her team of co-researchers at the Centre for Metropolitan History have created an extremely valuable reference tool. During the past two decades, medieval social and economic historians have developed a keen interest in issues related to commercialization. Documenting the location, chronology, and uses of markets and fairs has been a major concern in this endeavour, and a number of excellent county and regional studies have appeared over the years. These have served well as building blocks for broader syntheses, but the field as a whole has long been hampered by the absence of a standard, authoritative source with coverage of all parts of the country and all medieval centuries. Letters and her team have at last solved this problem with resounding success.

The *Gazetteer* is structured on a simple and straightforward basis, providing entries organized by individual commercial location, arranged alphabetically within each county. A separate section is devoted to Wales, treated as a single unit. Within each entry, information is given about the earliest datable reference to the conduct of commercial activity at that particular place, the days on which the market or fair met, and the person or institution vested with authority to hold the gathering. To assist analysis of the material, most entries also provide information about the amount of tax paid in the 1334 lay subsidy, and about the survival of the venue into the sixteenth century, as determined by comparison with Alan Everitt's list of early modern markets and William Harrison's 1587 list of fairs. Ancillary material related to the commercial fortunes of the site is also provided in many cases, including among other things

evidence from law suits over franchisal rights, manorial descents, and miscellaneous references to trade taking place at the site.

To this reviewer's eyes, the information provided is comprehensive and reliable. Undoubtedly evidence for other markets and fairs will surface from time to time, but it is unlikely that much more will be found. In addition to its thoroughness, three features of the *gazetteer* deserve special comment. The first is the care taken in translating place-names from their medieval forms into their current modern forms. Anyone who has attempted this feat even on a limited scale understands how daunting such an undertaking can be. The inclusion of Ordnance Survey grid references for each entry enhances this accomplishment. The second notable feature is the provision of multiple indexes to the work, allowing it to be searched efficiently for information about the individuals and institutions holding rights over markets and fairs, as well as about where the markets and fairs were held. The third notable feature is the level of detail provided for markets operating before the standard documentary sources are available (essentially before 1200). These early markets are notoriously difficult to date, and the compilers of the work are to be commended for their effort in dealing with this problem.

Letters and her team limited their searches to source material already in print. A work on this scale assembled with such great care would have been difficult to complete in any other way. It is, nonetheless, unfortunate that the team working on this project did not make use of the manuscript sources emanating from the royal office of the Clerk of the Market, a relatively comprehensive source of information about medieval markets and one that is reasonably accessible for research in the Public Record Office. Inclusion of such material would have greatly enriched the ancillary references furnished for many listings, and would have been particularly useful in narrowing the chronological parameters within which individual markets operated. The compilers of the work state that one of the key aims of their research was to define the active working life of each venue listed, but their decision to use the sixteenth century as their reference point fails to do justice to this important topic.

Perhaps the biggest problem confronting this volume is the limited accessibility of the series in which it appears. The List and Index Society has a venerable pedigree as a publisher of research tools for scholars, but its volumes can be difficult to obtain, particularly outside the United Kingdom. According to WorldCat, only about three dozen libraries in North America subscribe to the Society's Special Series, and a random check of individual library catalogues reveals that even some of the biggest libraries do not subscribe to it. This

probably reflects recent austerities in library budgets, and one can only hope for improvement in this situation, so that work of such high quality as Samantha Letters and her team have produced will find the wide audience it deserves.

JAMES MASSCHAELE

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IAN D. WHYTE, *Landscape and history since 1500* (Reaktion Books, 2002). 256 pp. £25.

This is an intelligent and ambitious book which, among other things, seeks to unite two different kinds of approach to the study of the landscape: those which explore the physical landscape as a many-layered product of past economic and social activity; and those which emphasize landscape's 'symbolic qualities', and in which landscape is 'the external world mediated through subjective human experiences ... not merely the world we see [but] a construction of that world'. Whyte thus seeks to bring together the tradition of landscape history/archaeology developed by Hoskins, and elaborated by Taylor, Rackham, and others, and the approaches of cultural geographers such as Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, and art historians and scholars of English literature such as John Barrell and Ann Bermingham. This in itself is a tall order, but the book is in fact more ambitious than this, for it embraces not only the whole of Britain but also, to varying extents, Europe and America. Successive chapters deal with the emergence and development of these different approaches: the early modern landscape; 'Enlightenment, picturesque and romantic landscapes'; 'Industrial and imperial landscapes'; and 'Modern and post-modern landscapes'.

Whyte writes well and the book contains much that is interesting and informative, especially to those landscape historians (especially at the undergraduate level) who may be unfamiliar with much of the cultural geography/art historical literature. But it is not without its problems. The scope is somewhat uneven in that there is no consistency of geographical coverage: southern Europe appears, for example, in some detail when art-historical matters are discussed but change in its 'real' landscape is hardly ever mentioned. At sudden, unpredictable moments the focus suddenly narrows back to Britain or England. This is in part a consequence of the book's ambitious scope yet relatively limited length, and many arguments are, inevitably, simplified and abbreviated to a considerable extent. Another effect of this is that Whyte often reiterates or reinterprets traditional arguments which he himself clearly feels would merit reinvestigation. Thus the familiar suggestion that people only began to find upland scenery attractive in

the later eighteenth century as a result of William Gilpin's writing is developed in interesting ways, but only in passing is qualified with the comment 'some views and descriptions of English scenery from the 1750s are very much in the picturesque tradition'. A more rigorous investigation of whether the traditional argument is actually correct – before giving it a modish twist – might have been interesting.

There are other minor problems. The reason why particular themes or individuals are emphasized in the narrative are not always evident, and at times the book seems more concerned with people's general attitudes to the world than with their understanding of or reaction to landscape per se. Thus the intellectual influence of the geologist James Hutton is discussed in some detail but there is no mention of people like William Smith whose work on stratigraphy laid the foundations for the modern understanding of the physical landscape. Occasionally, Whyte makes excellent points but could have chosen his material better. Thus his discussion of how Constable and Gainsborough painted areas of East Anglia 'that had not been dramatically altered by eighteenth-century enclosure', part of an idealization of the rural landscape intended to suppress the extent of contemporary social and economic change, ought perhaps have mentioned Constable's *Mill on a common*, which shows East Bergholt common being ploughed up, probably for the first time ever, in the immediate aftermath of the enclosure of 1816.

Yet such criticisms are minor, carping and a little unfair. This is a book which covers a great deal of ground, and not surprisingly some is covered unevenly. Whyte displays an enviable knowledge of a vast range of writing, from a very diverse range of academic disciplines. The final chapter is a particularly succinct and lively summary of current views from the likes of David Matless and Stephen Daniels. Those whose main interest is in agricultural history, or in the structuring of the physical landscape, might be advised to look elsewhere: the book's strength lies in its analysis of the imagined, perceived landscape. But overall, highly recommended.

TOM WILLIAMSON

*University of East Anglia*

W. R. MEAD, *Pehr Kalm. A Finnish visitor to the Chilterns in 1748* (The author, 2003). ix + 159 pp. 18 illus. £10 incl. p&xp from the author, 6 Lower Icknield Way, Aston Clinton, Aylesbury HP22 5JS.

In 1748, Pehr Kalm was on his way to North America to study its botany but spent five months in England, including three weeks in Little Gaddesden in Hertfordshire visiting William Ellis the noted

agricultural writer who lived there and from whom he learnt the detail of local farming methods. This is a new translation of Kalm's diary of that stay with an introduction by Emeritus Professor William ('Bill') Mead, who first drew Kalm to the attention of my generation of agricultural historians. Kalm was of Finnish blood but born in Sweden where his parents had fled as the Russian empire expanded. He became a disciple of Carl Linnaeus, the brilliant Swedish naturalist and taxonomist. William Ellis, the object of his visit to Hertfordshire, was an important observer of mid eighteenth-century agrarian society, and Kalm was in little doubt even before he arrived that this district was the most advanced agricultural area of England. Its fame for the practicalities of field husbandry, animal management, and the use of implements indicated a place of invention and innovation, and Ellis's *Chiltern and Vale Farming* (1733) was widely circulated amongst Swedish estate owners. The commercialization of English life, let alone its agriculture, is a striking feature of Kalm's travels, observations and record. In describing the journey from Woodford in Essex to Little Gaddesden there is surely a hidden comparison with home: 'the entire countryside we passed through ... resembled a garden, so that nature as well as art and industry have spared nothing that is required to adorn it' (p. 36). He soon made contact with Ellis who instructed him in local agricultural ways. In consequence there is much to delight agricultural historians in this account, but let me use turnips as illustration. He describes using their leaves as a salad accompaniment to roast beef, a new experience but to be compared with the equivalent use of spinach. There is also a description of turnips as sheep fodder, a cornerstone of the agrarian revolution. In contrast he observes the relative absence of turnips from the open fields of the Vale of Aylesbury. He forms an opinion of Ellis that is instructive. While an important writer, observer, and sometime inventor, Ellis was also too dedicated to the study of agriculture ever to be an able practitioner. Indeed Mead at one stage refers to the 'charlatan' nature of Ellis's local reputation, which in Kalm's words translated as 'I have always hated a rural husbandry rooted in words and not deeds' (p. 148). This may be a short book but it is packed with detail of mid-eighteenth-century Chiltern and Vale agriculture by an acute contemporary observer, and Mead is to be thanked for bringing him back to our attention.

MICHAEL TURNER  
University of Hull

IAN WHYTE, *Transforming fell and valley. Landscape and parliamentary enclosure in north-west England* (University of Lancaster, Centre for North West Regional Studies, 2003). xi + 102 pp. 9 tables; 47 figs; 10 maps. £11.50.

This is the latest volume to appear in a long line of publications by the Centre of North West Regional Studies at the University of Lancaster. In lowland England it would be fair to say that its subject matter – parliamentary enclosure – has been done to death. What singles out this volume is that it relates to upland England: and the intimate history of parliamentary enclosure above the 100 to 200 metre datum is far from understood. Moreover, the study area, the Cumbrian region, had the largest proportion of such formerly unenclosed land of any English region. So for the transformation of the open fields substitute the transformation of the moors and fells, and other upland commons. They were mainly held as pasture before enclosure, a land use that was mainly retained after enclosure, though not always. While there is a certain ruggedness to the untrained modern eye, they are in fact every bit as planned a landscape as their counterparts in the midland counties and elsewhere. They just look different, in particular in their use of stone walls, as well as fences, for the demarcation of boundaries.

The misapprehension that has abounded historically is that in their unenclosed state they were wastelands. In truth, they were servants of a specific economy that was merely different, but an economy that at times was as productive as the exigencies of altitude and the weather permitted, against a background of changing market conditions. It is not simply pedantic to highlight this difference between less and more productive, between waste and improvable. The economy of these wild places may have been enhanced through their transformation from open moors and commons to more regulated pasture, but the timing of that enhancement is also instructive. For example, if the open fields of the English Midlands came under pressure over time, so also did the upland commons. Not least was this the case when stinting norms were subject to overgrazing often through the external pressure placed on them by the demand for grazing by the passing Scottish cattle trade, a pressure that local commoners accommodated by offering agistment or leasing rights to that trade. This pressure on grazing built up as the eighteenth century advanced and in time it threatened the sustainability of these commons. It was but a short step from regulated but communal ownership that was increasingly difficult to police, to an ownership pattern in severalty. This was only one reason for the emergence of enclosure and we should not dismiss the fact that sometimes there was a

land use change from pasture to arable production. Moreover, not all land involved was high up the valleys or on the fells. The topography sometimes relented. Therefore the resulting enclosure history in this part of England is more complicated than perhaps is always allowed.

Although we are talking about an economy dominated by animal production rather than arable it was undoubtedly the case that high prices during the French wars encouraged a plough-up of some land and a conversion to arable production. In addition, although parliamentary enclosure occurred in this region from the 1750s through to the 1890s, over half was concentrated from 1800 to 1830 when arable prices were at their greatest. There was also quite a considerable enclosure after 1850, especially in Westmorland, for which a link with the extension of the railways has been made. In short, monocausal explanations for the enclosure history of this otherwise distinctive region, as with any other, are doomed to failure.

However, what is apparent is the ease with which the chapters unfold as if telling that self-same story about the Midland counties. Thus chronology and location, economic motivation for change, opposition to that change, the social consequences ensuing, and the administration of the process, all have chapters and passages devoted to them in a way that replicates the unfolding of the story elsewhere. Similarity of presentation is one thing, but we must beware of suggesting too easily that it was such a uniform story. It was not, and we must thank the author for presenting it in a familiar way but uncovering some unfamiliar outcomes. One of the most striking relates to the social outcome, in which the emphasis is on the underlying continuity in rural society. Moreover, in Westmorland at least, as much common still remains open as was enclosed, and therefore to that extent the story remains yet incomplete.

MICHAEL TURNER  
*University of Hull*

REX RUSSELL, *From cock-fighting to chapel building. Changes in popular culture in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Lincolnshire* (Sleaford: Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire, Lincolnshire Archaeology and Heritage Reports Series, 6, 2002). vi + 119 pp. Illus. £16.95.

Rex Russell's latest contribution to the social history of Lincolnshire analyzes the changes which took place in rural popular culture over the course of the nineteenth century. A transformation in popular culture was achieved by two main elements: attacks 'from above' and adoption of new beliefs and standards 'from below'. How various parts of older culture traditions –

including bull-running, cock-fighting, plough plays, village festivals and statute fairs – were undermined is amply demonstrated through the reproduction of extracts from local newspaper reports. The fear and misunderstanding underpinning these attacks from the upper and middle classes is apparent. Plough Monday celebrations were described as 'heathenish customs', 'rustic fooleries' and 'a mere subsidiary means of getting money' by reports in the 1840s and '50s. The conversion of the harvest home into a well-ordered, church-led festival is used as an illustration of the imposition of rational recreation in village life. However, Russell's contention is that changing attitudes among the labouring poor themselves were perhaps more influential in transforming popular culture. Primitive Methodism, with its emphasis on self-help and humility, spearheaded this change. Through its religious, and later political radicalism, the chapel contributed much to the contents of a newer popular culture. The influence of friendly societies, with their orderly membership and processions, and the temperance movement, which offered workers meeting spaces and social provision away from the village pub, are also shown to have been significant. Finally the spread of literacy and educational institutions also aided the acceptance of a new rural culture in the nineteenth century. The changes in popular village culture were not always easily achieved. There were tensions and clashes, not only between the working classes and those who wanted to enforce change, but also between elements of the labourers' new culture: although the chapel and the temperance movement were closely linked, the teetotal zeal of the latter often divided chapel-goers. Russell is also careful to show that older practices and beliefs did not simply disappear from rural life and some traditions, such as rough music, persisted well into the twentieth century. Overall then, this is a pleasingly presented and well-packaged account. Some sections lack context or commentary, and historians will find little that is new or contentious. But the primary source material is used to good effect and will be of use to those who are introducing students to the debates over rural popular culture for the first time.

NICOLA VERDON  
*University of Reading*

JEREMY BURCHARDT, *The allotment movement in England, 1793–1873* (Royal Historical Society/Boydell, 2002). xii + 287 pp. 25 tables. £45.

'A pamphlet on the Poor Laws', observed Sidney Smith in an 1820 *Edinburgh Review* article, 'generally contains some little piece of favourite nonsense, by which we are gravely told this enormous evil may be perfectly cured. The first gentleman recommends little gardens; the

second cows; the third a village shop; the fourth a spade'. Historians in their turn have not, on the whole, taken either allotment gardens or the spade husbandry that nurtured them seriously. For Burchardt, however, allotments are not nonsense. In the course of nine closely argued chapters, backed by eight appendices and a fifteen-page bibliography, he sets out a compelling case for locating allotments at the heart of the narrative of mid-nineteenth century social progress and stability. This is the first ever full-length study of allotments and agricultural and rural historians will be indebted to Burchardt for decades to come.

The author necessarily takes some time setting the scene, choosing 1793 as a starting point as the conjectural date of the first documented allotments, in Wiltshire. Before the 1830s almost fifty per cent of documented allotment sites (still only 54 in total) were still all in Wiltshire or close to its borders. Burchardt prudently concludes that by 1830 the actual number of schemes was around double this. On the face of it, this seems low and Burchardt himself only fully accounts for it by arguing that 1830 was the hinge upon which allotment history turned. The year 1830 saw the critical coincidence of the Swing riots and the formation of the Labourers' Friend Society, the first and only national body dedicated exclusively to allotment promotion. To support his claim that Swing decisively shifted landowner and farmer opinion in favour of allotments, the author finds evidence to support the contemporary view that Swing left untouched those parishes which had allotments; but with site numbers so small the avoidance of riot may just have been chance, as he concedes.

A better test of the relationship between allotment provision and social unrest might be found by correlating such schemes with the incidence of Chartism, and especially support for the Chartist land plan. Burchardt considers this possibility; but he does so in a not especially systematic way (making no use of the subscribers' registers that survive in Board of Trade papers or the known distribution of land plan branches). He concludes that allotment promotion 'may have contributed to the genesis of the Chartist land plan'. However, a rough check of the sources Burchardt has not used, against the east midlands case study he offers, suggests that allotments may indeed have suppressed interest in the Chartist plan. Only four out of the twenty-two locations he identifies as visited by the indefatigable local propagandist for the Labourers' Friend Society apparently supported the land plan.

*The allotment movement* presents a long-overdue evaluation of the Labourers' Friend Society (of the records of which, implausibly surviving in the Greater London Record Office's Peabody Housing Trust

archives, it makes shrewd use). He necessarily draws heavily on its journal, published continuously from 1834 until 1884, bolstered by a full range of parliamentary papers and contemporary literature. His conclusions are suggestive and underline just how much remains to be found out concerning rural Victorian society. Allotments, Burchardt concludes, were a substantial compensation for common right and customary commons access. They raised family incomes significantly, perhaps by as much as a fifth. Furthermore, their prevalence across southern England meant, he argues, that agricultural labour there was never as proletarianized as is usually thought. They were a profoundly modernizing force: the land was restored to the labourers but in a marketized context that pointed towards individual enterprise, respectability and urban-style working-class mutuality. Burchardt is also persuaded, on the basis of qualitative evidence, that allotments reduced crime (some contemporaries thought the opposite). The combined effect of increasing allotment provision after 1830 'was to make villages less "rough" and more "respectable" and to control and channel social conflict into more regularized, peaceable and legal channels'. Concerning the latter, Burchardt places particular emphasis upon the allotment as a base 'to fly to', as labourers themselves put it, 'when times are hard and labour troubles have to be fought out'. These are large claims and Burchardt readily concedes that Methodism, elementary education, and more regular employment were as important in shaping rural social relations. In southern England, however, he suggests allotments may have contributed as much as any other factor.

In view of the claims made for their importance, it is unfortunate that the book nowhere states with complete clarity what the total extent of allotments by 1873 actually was. Burchardt chooses 1873 as his terminating date because of the fairly reliable Agricultural Returns for Great Britain of that year: they are no more than fairly reliable since they excluded both urban parishes and, probably, individual allotments over one acre in extent. Within these limitations the returns suggest the total number of plots was 242,542, with a density of more than one plot to every male agricultural labourer aged 10 or over in Leicestershire, falling to a ratio of one plot to thirty labourers in Westmorland. Nationally, the overall ratio was one allotment to 3.1 male labourers. Of course, and Burchardt shows this, not all allotment holders were agricultural labourers. However the basis for his generalizations about the social impact of allotment provision appears secure, until one stumbles across an aside (p. 223) that by the mid-1870s the proportion of parishes with allotments was 'probably' only 'about a third'. It is unclear if this includes urban as well as rural parishes;

nor is it completely clear how distribution varied regionally. For although Burchardt is very firm in claiming for allotments a significant social impact in rural southern England, density ratios were 9.5 in Kent and well over 11 in both Surrey and Sussex – only Shropshire, Cheshire, Lancashire and Westmorland had poorer levels of provision by his criteria. By 1873 the clear strongholds for allotments were the east Midlands and Warwickshire. (This perhaps suggests that miners may have been as significant a tenant base as farm workers, a point not explored by the author, except obliquely in Somerset in 1839.) Ultimately, for all its extensive calculations of profits, yields, rents and sizes, backed by a two-thousand strong computerized dataset, *The allotment movement* still leaves some key questions tantalisingly unanswered.

MALCOLM CHASE  
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### Elsewhere and general

ADRIAAN VERHULST, *The Carolingian economy* (CUP, 2002). 160 pp. £37.50 (hbk); £13.95 (pbk).

Adriaan Verhulst has written an useful and accessible Cambridge Medieval textbook on the Carolingian economy, drawing upon a lifetime's research. The book focuses upon economic issues as opposed to the more familiar political ones made famous by the book's dedicatee, François Ganshof. The short introduction provides a clear overview of the historiography of this subject, briefly describing in turn the contribution of major medieval historians including Henri Pirenne, Alfons Dopsch, Maurice Lombard, Sture Bolin, Philip Grierson and, more recently Georges Duby. Verhulst himself belongs in this galaxy of distinguished historians. The book then comprises ten clearly written chapters, amply footnoted, on landscape and settlement, demography, agricultural production, agricultural technique, craft and production, commercial organization, directions of trade, money and prices, the state economy and, finally, a short but cogent summary offering a 'long perspective'. In many ways, the book is a model of synthesis – a historian's summary serving as an attractive first step towards reading Michael McCormick's monumental *The origins of the medieval economy* (CUP, 2001) which appeared as Verhulst's book was in press.

Verhulst summarizes an impressive amount of information into each of these chapters. Not only does he provide a compelling overview of the historical debates, but he manages a considerable survey of the pertinent and contemporary archaeological literature from both sides of the Alps. Much of this is taken from the recent European Science Foundation's 'Transformation of the Roman World' project. The chapter on agricultural

production is a typical example. He reduces the recent debates stimulated by Pierre Toubert on Italian estate management in this period to one cogent page. Many might quibble, but it is an invaluable index to Toubert's vast studies of Latium's estate histories. The chapters on crafts as well as commerce are no less impressive for the wealth of archaeological and documentary data woven together.

The underlying thrust of the book is developed from a quotation by Chris Wickham that the Carolingian economy was 'a network of subsistence-based exchange' (p. 2). Verhulst uses this to distinguish between minimalists and maximalists: those who interpret the sources to show a closed agrarian-based economy without towns, merchants or trade, or those who, largely using data from Carolingian estate surveys, polyptychs, believe this age marked the 'take off' of the western economy. Verhulst's position is clear: taking a 'long perspective', he concludes that it is the cyclical movements within the period that should now command our interest. Towns and trade, he argues, are the best indicators of these movements (as McCormick tellingly shows in his huge book cited above). Interestingly, he uses the archaeological typology of trading towns, emporia, as a framework for relocating the familiar historical events of the age. Hence, while clearly uncertain about the motives for the early eighth-century rise of the emporia, it is, he maintains, the great zenith of these places in the years from 775–90 to c. 830 which sets the stage for the ninth century. On the one hand, their decline, he argues, is responsible for the Viking attacks. On the other hand, thanks to the successful establishment of well-organized 'big estates', producing surpluses, during a pause in the Viking attacks in the 860s new towns were created which became the cornerstone of the middle ages.

Verhulst is possibly the first historian to acknowledge these nuances in the economic cycles using archaeological data. Notwithstanding ever increasing refinements of these data (see for example, Simon Coupland, 'Trading places: Quentovic and Dorestad reconsidered', *Early Medieval Europe* 11 (2002), pp. 209–32 and Tim Pestell and Katharina Ulmschneider (eds), *Markets in early medieval Europe* (2003)), this is a historian using contemporary sources, evaluating them and setting a new historical agenda that is all the more impressive for being concise and compelling. As a textbook it is presently without rival and well worthy of the best work of its dedicatee.

RICHARD HODGES  
University of East Anglia

PETER JONES, *Liberty and locality in revolutionary France.*

*Six villages compared, 1760–1820* (CUP, 2003). xiv + 306 pp. 6 plates; 6 figs; 10 maps. £45.

In the years from 1793 to 1800, travellers returning to the French countryside were met with a deafening silence: the everyday tolling of village bells, which had marked times of day, moments of prayer, weddings, births, deaths, and much else, was not to be heard. A revolutionary measure to efface the clerical underpinnings of the Old Regime, the silencing of church bells made way for a new routine sound, the martial beat of the drum that signalled the call to assemble or sounded the alarm.

This is but one of the memorable discoveries that await readers of this fine, engaging book. Path-breaking and painstaking, it is a comparative study of six villages chosen to ensure wide geographical distribution and contrasting ecological situations. The book's approach and arguments bespeak a clear allegiance to Tocqueville over Marx and Georges Lefebvre, so accordingly the main theme is the political evolution that arose from the interaction of state policy and local practice. Like Tocqueville, Jones concludes that equality before the law was more enduring than liberty (political participation) at the village level, an irony for a book so entitled. Nonetheless, he shows persuasively that state centralization of the kind Tocqueville attributed to the Old Regime was in fact a product of the Directory and Empire.

Tocqueville's failings in rural history are not overlooked either but persuasively corrected. His argument that state centralization sapped the life out of rural communities during the Old Regime is put to rest, thanks to compelling comparative evidence for the six diverse villages. Four of the six had a tradition of regular assemblies, and village officials were not the unlettered creatures of Tocqueville's imagination but a literate elite whose control of economic resources and positions within the seigneurial enterprise assured a steady – if oligarchic – hand at the wheel. The power of seigneurs and their agents, underestimated by Tocqueville and numerous revisionist historians today, exerted a shaping and often unwelcome influence over daily life. That peasant resistance in the cases under study was typically short-lived and episodic suggests, ventures Jones, that a shared sense of reciprocity continued to guide the relations between lords and peasants.

Between 1787 and 1790, the argument continues, the Old Regime died in the minds of villagers as one reform after another flowed down from Versailles and Paris, providing the welcome writs for peasants to break free of seigneurialism. Differing greatly from George Lefebvre's description of the peasant revolution as largely an autonomous movement, Jones' account

emphasizes the connections between Parisian authorities and village officials – an approach reflecting the author's reliance on the minute books of the new communal governments. Village elites, these sources reveal, kept in close contact with the National Assembly, looking there to confirm their new rights and usually succeeding in manoeuvring revolutionary mandates for change to their own advantage. Courting approval from above and endorsement from below, dynasties of power brokers usually remained in charge over the whole period – a conclusion that stands shoulder to shoulder with Jean-Pierre Jessenne's account of rural Artois (*Pouvoir au village et révolution: Artois, 1760–1848* (Lille, 1987)).

Novel and interesting is the fresh evidence in Chapters Three and Four on peasant politicization and the new civic landscape of village life. From 1787, villagers were schooled in national politics, and few could ignore how the influence of the state in their lives expanded and how the meaning of liberty was further and further narrowed under the Directory, Consulate, and Empire. Although we learn little about the resentments such narrowing caused or about grievances that arose from huge war-time requisitions of men, food, and horses, Jones gives imaginative attention to the lessons villagers received in civics and national identity. That effort sheds new light on evolving notions of citizenship that were reinforced by oath taking and service in the National Guard, just as it indicates how the practice of regular elections from 1789 to 1804 built a firm foundation of democratic political culture at the village level. In his treatment of rituals and their changing political functions, the revolutionary experience comes alive. As to what endured, Jones emphasizes that a new belief took hold in the minds of villagers: in sharp contrast to the old order, the new bureaucracy was the guarantor of legal equality; moreover, it both enforced and obeyed the law. Chapter Six studies another enduring change and an underlying continuity: the state's subordination of the church and the persistence of religious belief despite the suppression of public worship from 1793 to 1800.

Did three generations of reform establish liberty on the land? Here, some will regret, Jones steers clear of debates about rural capitalism. Vigilant against anachronism and the encroachments of theory, he treats agrarian reform efforts as they materialized in his six villages from the land clearance edicts of 1764 to the 1804 law that regularized the procedures for dividing common lands. The ways in which top-down reforms aggravated local misunderstandings are treated with skill. His discerning analysis of national land sales during the Revolution and Empire confirms the prevailing view that the rural and urban bourgeois were the chief

beneficiaries of the sales. Moreover, it enriches our understanding both of the Jacobin efforts to turn the landless into micro-proprietors and how these efforts, together with the division of common lands, met to some degree the peasant hunger for land. In treating the continuing conflicts that pitted enclosure against collective rights, he wisely reminds us that self-interest has a logic all its own. At bottom, rich and poor alike wanted to have their cake and eat it too: exclusive access to land they possessed and customary rights over the lands of others.

Such vintage insights that appear time and again in the book occasionally need elaboration or clarification. In the chapter just discussed, for example, readers convinced by the claim in the pre-Revolutionary discussion that 'no consensual language of "rights" and "freedoms" existed in the agrarian world in the Old Regime' are left to wonder whether the situation was much different when Louis XVIII returned to the throne, for conflicts over individual and collective rights continued, and Napoleon's hope of creating a uniform code of agrarian law never materialized. Another question concerns seigneurialism. Given its demise and the consequent elimination of shared rights on land previously held by seigneurial tenure, more about the implications of this critical change for new and evolving definitions of private property would have been helpful. Finally, that land became 'an unmistakable signifier of citizenship' with particular import for the previously landless is another insight mentioned only in passing. It cries out for additional development, the better to grasp the fuller meaning of revolutionary change at the village level.

Such a missed opportunity results partly from the decision to end the story in 1820. From the Consulate through the Restoration, the slim evidence on village politics falls all but silent until 1830 when elections of communal officials were restored and the voices of micro-proprietors could again be heard, sometimes loudly. It was then, when political possibilities were reopened by the July Revolution in Paris, that the suppressed language of *liberté* and citizenship was often recalled with vigour and memories of the Revolution were invoked in popular efforts to restore participatory citizenship and the accountability of their heretofore appointed mayors. Long curtailed, liberty returned to the village in the 1830s and to varying degrees depending on the locality.

One other missed opportunity is worth mentioning: the absence of any discussion of seigneurial justice and its successor as court of first instance, the Justice of the Peace. As recent research by Zoe Schneider, Jeremy Hayhoe, Anthony Crubaugh, and the reviewer has shown, the functioning of seigneurial justice reveals

much about village governance and power relations not only between the lord and peasants but also between village elites and ordinary residents. In open-field communities at least, the courts regulated agrarian practices and settled to general satisfaction disputes involving crop damage by trespassing livestock. More broadly, seigneurial justice shaped villagers' perceptions of law and legal rectification. How villagers assessed and responded to new civic arrangements and new rules of law depended in no small way on those Old Regime perceptions.

One quibble: in a book brimming with meticulous archival research, it is regrettable that the author chose to keep footnotes to a minimum.

This book confirms Jones' place among the premier historians of rural France during the Old Regime and Revolution. A fine achievement, the study builds on the strong foundation of his earlier work and includes important new departures. That seigneurialism in a diverse selection of villages was more significant than anticipated is one good example, a finding that will be influential. That villagers, and especially the elites among them, came to understand the relevance of national politics for their own lives and interests is a revision of greater importance. It persuasively restores the origins of peasant politicization to the Revolution, undermining further the claim by Eugen Weber – and by Jones in his first book – that this process began only when the schools and teachers of the Third Republic were well-established. For these and other reasons, this avowed experiment in comparative micro-history is a noteworthy success. Elegantly written and wisely argued, the study will hopefully convince others to add comparative perspective to their research into rural history. Those who do might consider whether a Tocquevillian approach gives undue attention to top-down commands and local responses; they might also consider seigneurial justice and weigh the advantages of pushing beyond 1820 and into the 1830s. Although much talent, time, and energy will be needed to match the author's accomplishment, his book calls out inspiringly, '*Aux archives!*'

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WILLIAM GERVASE CLARENCE-SMITH, *Cocoa and chocolate, 1765–1914* (Routledge, 2000). xiv + 319 pp. 13 tables; 11 figs; 8 maps. £55.

It is often hard to grasp the history of simple, everyday things: difficult to imagine that the readily-available consumables of modern life the world over have their own important and revealing history. How many stop to ponder the history of sweetness when they add sugar to their range of drinks and foodstuffs? Scholars of material

consumption of course have taken a different approach, concentrating not merely on the explosion of material acquisitiveness from the seventeenth century onwards, but teasing historical meaning from the most commonplace of daily artefacts. In the process, what has emerged is the story of a rapid and massive global expansion of production and consumption, drawing distant colonial settlements into an ever firmer economic and social dependency, first on the European, later the North American economic and political heartlands. Today, the process is clear and unavoidable. A generation ago, it was much less obvious. In the interim a host of scholars from a range of disciplines have provided the data and arguments from which we can take a measured view. Few had the intellectual sweep and imaginative grasp of Sidney Mintz in his wonderful book *Sweetness and power*, a book which has – properly – come to exercise great influence over the field. Clarence-Smith's latest contribution, on cocoa and chocolate, will be seen as another sophisticated study in the field, but arguing outwards from a specific example.

It is a major study of an important commodity and product, and a book which derives from the author's distinctive intellectual grasp across a range of disciplines. It is not an easy read, arguing its case through a thicket of secondary and primary materials, but what emerges is one of the most important volumes in the field. Indeed the book's importance greatly transcends the focus of its study. In effect Clarence-Smith has produced both a definitive statement on the subject, and a major argument for all students of commodity production and material consumption.

The author begins with an incisive argument about the commodity chain, before moving backwards to the historical origins of cocoa and chocolate in meso America. A study of the fiscal and taxation relationship to the historical development of the global chocolate industry leads the author to a detailed account of the technical development of chocolate production itself. Here, as elsewhere, Clarence-Smith moves with intellectual ease between the specifics of his study and the broader issues which lie in the background, seeking at every turn to draw the reader's attention to the overarching theoretical issues and questions. The book is shaped by the author's own grappling with major questions, and the reader moves with him, from the specifics of each chapter, back to the broader intellectual canvas. When he steps into the historical geography of land and production, the author seems to get into his literary stride, providing a sweep and grasp of global patterns. At times, what he writes seems straightforward and obvious – but that is merely testimony to Clarence-Smith's ability to make sense, for others, of a complex

and bewildering global literature. Much the same applies to his analysis of the labour systems, free and unfree, used to cultivate cocoa/chocolate. As with sugar and tea, behind the pleasures (and necessities) of a global market there lay a rapaciousness towards land and labour which caused ecological damage and human distress on a massive scale. The author's conclusions are pithy – but (to this reviewer at least) bleak. The world-wide pleasurable addiction to chocolate products, along with other tropical products, pose serious harm to the earth's natural habitats and resources. But who so much thinks of that, mid-morning, when millions take their break by eating or drinking chocolate?

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ROGER G. KENNEDY, *Mr Jefferson's lost cause. Land, farmers, slavery, and the Louisiana Purchase* (OUP, 2003).  
xv + 350 pp. 15 halftones and maps. £18.99.

Roger Kennedy's account of Thomas Jefferson does not paint him in an admirable light. Kennedy certainly makes a well-documented argument that Jefferson helped to extend the plantation economy and slavery in the South and in doing so passed up the opportunity to promote his agrarian vision. We are told that Jefferson did not avail himself of the opportunity to manumit his slaves, he did not push for an antislavery clause in the land ordinance of 1784, and he discouraged the development of a mixed agricultural and manufacturing economy in the lower Mississippi valley after the Louisiana Purchase. The result was the extension of the plantation system, the concomitant expansion of slavery, the continued degradation of southern land and a dependency on the vagaries of international cotton markets instead of a society of small independent farmers with some mixed manufacturing. Kennedy claims that Jefferson abandoned his vision out of economic self-interest, a psychological need for the approval from southern plantation society and for political expediency. Moreover, we are told that had Jefferson used 'his talent for persuasion', southern land may actually have become the 'seed-bed for family farmers'.

Kennedy offers a good analysis of the ecological and human costs of the way things went and a compelling argument that Jefferson did not use his power to promote a different course of economic development which would have been more humane and ecologically sound. Nonetheless, Kennedy's analysis should be tempered with a more complete picture of Jefferson's economic thinking and a less romanticized and naïve vision of his agrarian ideal. Jefferson came of political age at a time of great economic change. The remnants of feudal society were being discarded and new institutional

arrangements were emerging in the wake of a wholly different economic order which itself was rapidly transmogrifying. Economic thinkers of the time were attempting to articulate systematically the parameters of this new order and so was Jefferson. This was not a simple matter leaving room for much ambiguity and confusion.

When Jefferson spoke of the independent farmer he did not intend that farmers would be independent of markets, he simply meant that they would be able to dictate the rhythms of their work day and would not be forced (as those working in manufacturing were) to spend their days tied to the rhythms of work dictated by the expediciencies of machines. Jefferson, following Adam Smith, was taken with the market economy as the natural order of society built around the principles of specialization and free trade. Indeed the South had carved out a particular economic niche based on climate, the labour of slaves and an abundance of accessible land. Jefferson's promotion of the plantation economy and his disapproval of manufacturing are given greater context against this backdrop. Why engage in manufacturing with all of its concomitant ills when it made more economic sense to specialize in agriculture and then trade? The South had been integrated more fully into 'world' markets than the North by the time Jefferson came of political age. Thus, at first glance the South may have seemed to him exemplary of this new economic order, at least in theory. (Obviously there was substantial dissonance between Jefferson's first-hand economic experience and the orderly framework of economic liberalism which he found so appealing.)

Mr Kennedy's notion that the alternative to the plantation system was Jefferson's agrarian ideal ignores the connection between the two. Jefferson certainly might have been able to reconcile his agrarian vision with the plantation system since both were variations around the same economic theme. They were linked through specialization and free trade and the view of the market economy as the natural order. In this sense these two options may not have been as divergent to Jefferson as Kennedy seems to imply. From this purely economic perspective, Jefferson's adherence to the plantation system need not be interpreted as a complete abandonment of his agrarian vision but rather part of a world view rooted in early nineteenth-century economic liberalism and embodying all of the confusions therein.

My purpose here is not to exonerate Jefferson in his complacency on the issue of slavery nor on his self-serving motivations for pushing for the expansion of the plantation system. Roger Kennedy's picture of him is accurate and carefully documented. Nevertheless, the story of Jefferson should to be punctuated with a more

robust understanding of the economic vision which was foundational to his thinking. At the very least this vision gave him a bit of room to 'reconcile' the plantation economy with his agrarian ideal and in doing so to neglect the cause of emancipation.

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MARGARET E. DERRY, *Bred for perfection. Shorthorn cattle, Collies, and Arabian horses since 1800* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2003). xvi + 198 pp. Illus. £27.50.

Several years ago (and against my better judgement) I attended a meeting at which an internationally celebrated breeder of performance horses discussed his approach towards pedigree breeding. Questioned on the issue of chromosome segregation at meiosis by a somewhat querulous geneticist who had spent much of his career studying mice, the breeder (himself of impeccable bloodline) loftily retorted that what may well apply to the mouse couldn't possibly apply to the 'noble animal'. And therein rests enshrined much of the purblind ignorance characterizing the pedigree breeding world until recent years. Happy enough with Galtonian eugenic notions, pedigree breeders ignored the revelations of Mendelian genetics in their obsession with male pedigrees, distrusted the arguments of scientists, and even with the development of population genetics in the mid-twentieth century, saw little reason to alter their approach which they divined as an 'art' rather than a 'science'. Even today, the last fifty years' advances in genetics have done little to change the fundamentals of pure breeding which remain in principle much the same as the techniques applied by Bakewell, Bates and the Collings brothers to Shorthorn cattle, William E. Mason and Samuel Untermayer to Collie dogs and Lady Judith Wentworth to Arab horses.

It is to these animals that Margaret E. Derry (herself a breeder) turns her attention in this engaging and carefully researched book. Central to Derry's six chapters in which she discusses the breeding of Shorthorns, Collies and Arabians since the early nineteenth century is the basic theme that breeding ideology and the growth of internal and transatlantic markets were closely intertwined in the creation of purebred animals. Whatever may have been the absurdities of the obsession with 'show' points, the craving for 'prettiness' or the mistaken belief that 'quality' was invariably linked to pure blood or a specific coat colour, the market was a profoundly important driver in breed evolution. This applied as much to J. P. Morgan and Albert Payson Terhune who wrote extensively of Collie genealogy and the connection between human and canine values, as to Judy Blunt Lytton, Lady Wentworth (d. 1957) who did so much to

establish the international trade in Arab horses, or those late nineteenth-century Shorthorn breeders who capitalized successfully on the transatlantic trade. Economics aside, the trade in pedigree animals was closely regulated and Derry writes at length on methods of registration and recording by way of Coates Herd Book, the Arabian Horse Registry of America, which strongly influenced the dynamics of a global Arabian industry, and the Kennel Clubs of Great Britain and the USA whose membership strove manfully to eliminate the corruption and fraudulence associated with the dog-breeding world of the earlier nineteenth century. The pedigree world was (and even to some extent remains) a socially exclusive milieu, dominated by fashion, faddism and fancy and driven by passionate idealism and not a little greed. People who argue over whether the red, white or roan colouring of a cow is linked to utility or whether the set of the ears or shape of the nose of a dog relates to its temperament tend to fall upon bad times, and Derry's exposition of the economics of the Arab world is not short on examples of penal taxation, bankruptcy and divorce. In a sense the book is a detailed study of obsession, of the conflict between pedigree and commercial concerns and of the unspoken belief among breeders that line breeding of animals and line breeding of people amounted, as Harriet Ritvo noted, to much the same thing!

While Derry's volume admirably exposes the foibles and eccentricities of pedigree breeders and discusses the many factors motivating their activities, it is largely devoid of background genetic theory or statistical data. We learn little of the problems of inbreeding depression or of inbreeding theory central to the business of pedigree breeding itself; the term 'variety' is sometimes applied incorrectly, and other terms such as 'beefing quality' are used without any indication of implications for physical conformation. In the discussion of Shorthorn cattle, of which the early-maturing beef type came to dominate the world cattle trade, there is virtually no mention of the Dairy Shorthorn which became so vitally important to the British farming economy, while it would have been useful to have read of the extent to which the transatlantic trade in Arabian horses was paralleled in other equine breeds. Equally, the narrative would have benefited from some discussion of the nature/nurture argument which rumbled through the nineteenth century, provoked, in the horse world at least, by the writings of Osmer, Wall and others the century previously. But these are minor criticisms of omission. The historian of livestock, ideally equipped with a decent undergraduate textbook of genetics, will find much to learn and much to enjoy in Dr Derry's book and its very valuable tailpiece essay on her sources.

Her multi-faceted story is generously illustrated throughout with bovine, canine and equine *dramatis personae*, including 'Lad' (1902–1918) who brought tears to many an eye and, along with Eric Knight's 'Lassie', established the popularity of the Collie breed in the middle of the last century. The book is largely free of the usual typos although I have a sneaking suspicion that Dr Derry will feel less than charitably disposed towards the Johns Hopkins proof-reader who failed to spot the reference to 'pubic pedigrees' on page 66. On the other hand, I have probably missed the point!

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RITA ALDENHOFF-HÜBINGER, *Agrarpolitik und protektionismus. Deutschland und Frankreich im Vergleich, 1879–1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2002). 257 pp. 14 tables. €28.

Over the past two decades a dramatic shift has occurred in the interpretation of modern German history. Previously, there was axiomatic acceptance of the thesis presented by non-agricultural historians that the decision of 1879 to adopt a grain tariff made a fundamental contribution to the rise of Nazism. It was presumed that duties on imported grain, which were increased in 1885 and 1902 (and supplemented with protection for the livestock sector), maintained the economic existence and political power of the *Junkers* – a class of large (in German rather than British terms) landowner-farmers of the nobility that became a particular *bête noire* of British First World War propaganda – as inefficient agriculturalists. Historians have since at least mitigated the link between the *Junkers* and National Socialism. Agricultural historians have established that *Junker* farming under the tariff was decidedly progressive.

A basic problem is determining 'efficiency'. In the absence of other satisfactory data, the author of the work under review simply adopts estimated output/yields per hectare over time, as indicating that German arable farming had clearly overtaken that of Britain by the eve of the First World War. This occurred despite the retreat from marginal arable land in Britain from the 1870s, as compared with an increase in the area in Germany. The measure, however, ignores labour and capital productivity. Even allowing for the substantially higher real wages of British agricultural workers, low as they were, it is questionable whether German labour productivity exceeded that of Britain before 1914. The increase of German arable output came increasingly to depend upon hundreds of thousands of seasonal immigrants, mainly from Russian Poland, who were poorly paid and, partly on that account, not highly

efficient. Paradoxically, the influx of cheap Polish labour into Germany's *Junker*-dominated eastern territories, insofar as it stimulated the migration of German workers to western urban centres, posed a political threat to the German state that the tariff was supposed to prevent. The continuous increase in application rates of artificial fertilizer per hectare of arable land in Germany (especially in comparison to France), which accounted for an increasing proportion of capital outlays, was presumably reaching the point of diminishing returns.

In this light the exploration of the Franco-German comparison, as in the volume under review, has considerable merit. France also resorted to tariff protection at a comparable level in response to the rapid expansion of grain exports from North America and Russia. For agricultural as well as political reasons, both experienced an intensification of arable farming which, temporarily at least, was seen as requiring protection. For the large area of poor, mostly sandy soils in the eastern territories of Germany, the only alternative was the reversion of the land to extensively-farmed permanent pasture. The latter would have considerably increased the already substantial indebtedness among farmers. In both countries steps were taken to reduce the debt burden. The structure of holdings in the two countries was comparable. A significantly greater proportion of the agricultural area of France was occupied by leaseholders. If anything, however, as the author argues, leaseholders were more motivated than owners to adopt improved methods. And leasehold land in France was particularly concentrated in the north where the farming was relatively progressive. Nevertheless, in overall terms such progress in the case of France was retarded as compared with Germany.

The comparatively poor performance of French agriculture behind the tariff barrier is essentially ascribed to

two factors. First, whereas the state in Germany was prepared to impose arrangements, such as chambers of agriculture, to promote modernization, in France (at least before the 1920s) this was left to self-help organizations. Second, as compared with Germany, France's demographic and industrial retardation limited the growth of the protected market for agricultural produce. This conclusion has interesting implications for the intense 'agricultural versus industrial state' debate in Germany before 1914, where many contributors assumed it was a choice between alternatives.

While the volume is a useful contribution, there are several deficiencies. It is essentially based on secondary sources, and selective ones at that. The focus is more on the political debates over the issues than on the outcomes in terms of the impact of agricultural policy on production. The work veers away from examining the political process in relation to policy formulation to explore the Franco-German protectionist response as the forerunner of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Hence an entire chapter is devoted to the international agricultural congresses, essentially Franco-German, which were little more than forums for discussion. If the protectionist agricultural policy adopted by Germany marks the origins of the CAP, then perhaps the statement made by the historian Hans Rosenberg in the 1960s can be extended:

When one considers ... the fateful long-term irrational ideological domestic and foreign policy consequences of agricultural policy up to National Socialism, with the benefit of hindsight it can be proven that the turning-point of 1879 was the greatest mistaken decision of German and thereby European history in the nineteenth century.

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# Conference Report:

## The Society's Winter Conference, 2003

### 'Retailing agricultural produce'

*by Mark Rothery*

This year's winter conference took place in Senate House, at the Institute of Historical Research, in Bloomsbury, London. The four papers, spanning a period from the thirteenth century to the present day, were all connected by the conference theme of 'Retailing agricultural produce'.

Proceedings began with a paper given by Dr James Davis, of Cambridge, entitled 'Middlemen, markets and the movement of agricultural produce, 1200–1500'. Dr Davis focused on the involvement of cornmongers in the movement of grain. Though previously neglected by historians, the frequency and location of cornmongers is crucial for an understanding of the extent and complexity of agricultural markets and, more generally, the relationship between rural and urban societies. Although ideas such as Central Place Theory and Market Circuits do fit the structure and nature of markets in counties such as Suffolk, they become problematic when applied to an analysis of cornmongers. Market circuits, whereby small markets in a locale or region were timed so as to allow movement and trade between them, were not friendly to middlemen involved in the grain trade. Problems associated with legal, moral and transport restrictions meant that cornmongers could not have made large profits and it seems likely that their involvement in village and small town markets was confined to periods of dearth. There were other ways in which grain could reach smaller urban centres, for example, through direct trade between landed estates and markets. Indeed, the expanded demesne farming and 'market strategies' on large estates in the thirteenth century favoured this. Overall, it was shown that, outside the advanced socio-economic forms found in London, the medieval grain trade was not very closely integrated into wider marketing systems.

The second paper: 'Licensed badgers and agricultural marketing, 1550–1750' given by Dr Wendy Thwaites carried the subject of middlemen and markets further into the early modern period, concentrating on the licensing of badgers by the local and central state. The main legislation, passed in 1552 and 1563, should not be seen as 'anti-middleman', as was the assumption in 1772 when the laws were repealed, but as a clear acceptance of their role and special status as lawful 'engrossers'. There were several relaxations and reinterpretations of these regulatory laws in later legislation that fixed the requirement of licenses according to prices, as occurred in 1663. Attention was drawn towards important regional variations in badgers and licensing. Local directives often differed from those originating from the centre, based as they were on local needs, types of agriculture and economic context. The term 'badger' was sometimes a generic one. In eighteenth-century Oxfordshire, it referred specifically to a corn dealer, whilst in Northamptonshire, between 1693 and 1710, those defined as badgers included oatmealmen, a maltman, higlers, poulterers, carriers, livestock drovers and jobbers. Account was also given to the effect of the demand created by larger and more central markets such as London and Oxford in the framing and enforcement of licensing regulations.

After lunch, Professor John Chartres, of Leeds, gave a wide-ranging discussion on the more structural and infra-structural aspects of the development of agricultural marketing: 'Urban and rural interactions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.' The few studies that have concentrated on both rural and urban society have emphasized the importance, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, of the canals and the railways as crucial elements in the increased integration of

urban-rural networks. However, whilst the railways were of great significance later, longer-term incremental changes in an earlier period, such as turnpikes, river navigation, ports and coastal shipping, impacted far more substantially overall. 'Modest transport changes' and a series of 'systemic efficiency gains' led to disequilibriums. These, in turn, led to wider changes, such as a decline in levels of enthusiasm for regulating markets, the growth of more concentrated market towns based on agriculture, or 'primary centres', the development of a hierarchy of market towns as some rose over others within this more 'efficient' urban-rural network, and crop specialization in areas such as liquorice and specialized cheeses. At the centre of a number of trade networks through a system of trunk routes, rivers and ports, Leeds and Wakefield were examples of these 'primary centres' of agricultural retail where the 'North Sea and the Atlantic met'.

The final contribution, 'Selling food, selling images: farmers as retailers in a "post-productivist" countryside', given by Dr Rosie Cox and Dr Lewis Holloway, of Coventry University, examined developments in the contemporary economic relationships between agricultural producers and consumers. Whilst supermarkets continue to dominate the agricultural retail market, in recent years there has been a growth in the popularity of

more direct types of agricultural retail or 'alternative food networks', such as organic box schemes, farmers' markets and community supported agriculture. Demand factors in the development of these markets are associated with the perceived bad 'quality' of food and concerns over the environmental impact of the production and distribution of the food found in supermarket retailers. On the supply-side, the tough conditions under which farmers have been forced to operate recently and the associated increase in the scale of agricultural production, has forced many into 'multi-functional agriculture', either diversifying into tourism or more direct types of marketing that avoid costly economic relationships with the dominant supermarket chains. It was suggested that this reflects a shift from a 'productivist' ethos in agricultural production, where the emphasis is laid on quantity and output, to a 'post-productivist' ethos, which lays more stress on quality. It was concluded that the role of the farmer may be redefined within the context of diversification and new consumer attitudes.

The discussions ended with thanks expressed by the secretary, Dr John Broad, to Dr Jane Whittle, of Exeter, for organising the conference and to the speakers for their contributions. It was hoped that the annual conference in 2004 would be equally well attended.

# The Agricultural History Review

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# Forthcoming Conferences

## Spring Conference 2005

The British Agricultural History Society's Spring Conference will be held at the University of Leicester from 11 to 13 April. Speakers will include Professor Alan Everitt on 'Leicestershire – portrait of a society', Professor Bas van Bavel on rural markets in the Low Countries from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, and Prof. Nicholas Goddard on environmental issues in the nineteenth century. Other speakers include Drs Richard Jones and Mark Page on medieval Whittlewood, and Fernando Collantes on the European Peasantry of the mountain regions and their response to industrialisation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There will be a 'New Researchers Session' covering topics from the medieval to the nineteenth century, and an excursion through the Leicestershire countryside to Lamport Hall and farm museum.

Arrangements have been made for those attending the Economic History Conference in Leicester immediately beforehand to remain in the same accommodation throughout.

As in previous years, a limited number of bursaries will be available to postgraduate students.

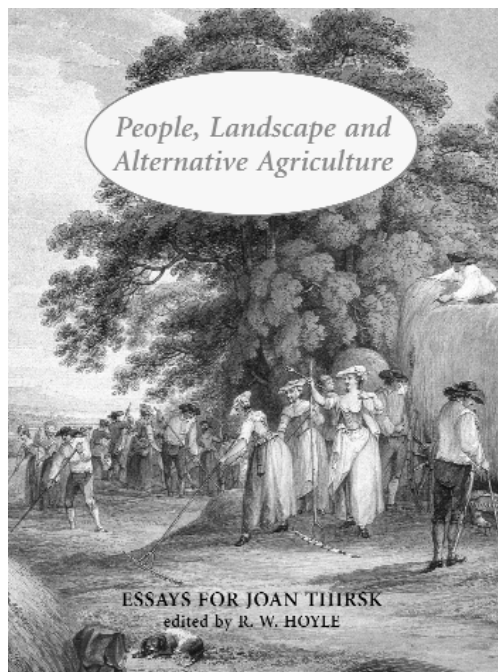
For further details, please contact the Society's Secretary, [j.broad@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:j.broad@londonmet.ac.uk) to whom offers of papers for future conferences should be sent. The full conference programme and registration forms will be available on the Society's website from early in the New Year, and will be circulated to members of the Society towards the end of January.

## People, landscape and alternative agriculture: essays for Joan Thirsk

The *Review's* third supplement, *People, landscape and alternative agriculture*, was published in July and supplied to individual subscribers to the Society as a part of their subscription for the subscription year 2004–5. However, the Society does not automatically supply copies of its supplements to institutional purchasers. It therefore urges those of its members in institutions whose libraries have standing orders for the *Review* to ensure that their library has placed a separate purchase order for the supplement (and its predecessor, *Roots of Change*). Details of how to secure copies can be found on the following page.

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# The uses and functions of ponds within early landscapes in the east Midlands\*

by Stephen G. Upex

## Abstract

Ponds are a neglected historic feature of the landscape. They vary in their dates of construction, many being related to the open fields of the pre-enclosure period where they formed an integral part of the farming system. Accounts of early enclosures also record their construction. Ponds provided water for livestock and draft animals, they linked with drainage systems and they also had miscellaneous functions such as being used for retting cloth and providing manure from pond cleaning. The present paper draws on both the field evidence of surviving ponds but also map and documentary materials to review the numbers, uses and origins of ponds in 26 parishes on the Cambridgeshire-Northamptonshire border.

Ponds are an everyday feature of the rural landscape yet there has been little discussion of their creation, dating or initial usage.<sup>1</sup> This paper reports the results of recent fieldwork in the east Midlands carried out between 1983 and 2002 in which ponds have been recorded for selected parishes and their distributions, functions and dates analyzed.<sup>2</sup> Ponds can have had a varied range of functions including being used as sources of water, as fishponds, as ponds with industrial uses such as hammer ponds or they may be former quarry or 'borrow pit' sites. The research for this paper has concentrated on surviving ponds, which related to pre-enclosure open fields or areas of land that were enclosed at an early period. Such ponds appear to have formed an integral part of the agricultural systems of the area and were used mainly for watering stock and draft animals as well as aiding drainage. The fieldwork excluded ponds within village built up areas such as that shown on an early map of Maxey in 1714, nor did it include clearly defined medieval ponds associated with either moated sites, medieval garden remains, the sites of fishponds or specific ponds found in villages for such functions as the retting of

\* I am grateful to the many farmers and landowners who gave permission to survey their land during the course of this research. Thanks are also due to the Nene Valley Archaeological Trust and staff at Peterborough Museum, Northampton Records Office, Huntingdonshire Records Office, and the National Monuments Collection. The late Sir Peter Proby allowed generous access to the library at Elton Hall.

<sup>1</sup> N. Harvey, *The industrial archaeology of farming in England and Wales* (1980), esp. chs 3 and 4; H. F. Cook, *medieval landscapes: settlement, society, environment* (2003).

'Field-scale water management in southern England to AD 1900', *Landscape Hist.*, 16 (1994), pp. 53–66; H. F. Cook and T. Williamson (eds), *Water management in the English landscape* (1999); T. Williamson, *Shaping*

<sup>2</sup> P. J. Williams *et al.*, *Lowland pond survey* (1996), p. 9 define a pond as a body of standing water between 25 sq. m. and 2 ha. which holds water for at least 4 months of the year.

material.<sup>3</sup> It is also worth reporting that there is no evidence of any so-called dewponds within the area. Such ponds have been fairly extensively covered within the literature. Nigel Harvey has described them as '... a rather ordinary sort of pond which man has chosen to afflict with a quite extraordinary sort of mythology, for dewponds are filled not by dew but by rain'.<sup>4</sup>

It is difficult to decide from the available field and archival evidence how many ponds merely coincided with naturally formed hollows or depressions in the ground. Naturally occurring water supplies would almost certainly have been maintained, used and modified by man as an alternative to digging artificial ponds. A few ponds of this sort survive in the east Midlands where natural springs occur. In Collyweston parish (Northants.), small ponds based on springs in the former Conduit Field are mentioned in 1723.<sup>5</sup> At Harringworth and Gretton similar springs were noted during the course of fieldwork and can be linked to features shown in pre-enclosure documents.<sup>6</sup>

Evidence from the Roman period indicates that some springs and ponds – such as the springs feeding the villa baths at Cotterstock – were utilized for water. On other sites ponds appear to have been artificially created during both the Iron Age and the Roman period.<sup>7</sup> O. G. S. Crawford pointed out as early as the 1960s that the names given to some ponds such as 'mere' or 'well' may indicate either a natural origin or a very early construction date. At Great Gidding it has been suggested that the element 'mere' in Flittermere Pond is associated with Anglo-Saxon hedge-lines and the establishment of the parish boundaries. At Elton and Warmington the element 'well' in Caldwell Pond, Wells-Slade Pond and Boswell Pond are all probably associated with surviving natural springs.<sup>8</sup> However field evidence indicates that a considerable number of ponds are not related to spring sources for their water and must be artificially

<sup>3</sup> To some extent ponds within these categories have been well reviewed already, see for example, B. K. Roberts, 'Medieval fishponds', *Amateur Historian* 7 (1966), pp. 119–25; J. M. Steane, 'Medieval fishponds in Northamptonshire', *Northants Past and Present* 4 (1970), pp. 299–309; C. C. Taylor, *Village and farmstead: a history of rural settlement in England* (1983); and the publications of the Moated Site Research Group. For the pond at Maxey see Northamptonshire Records Office (hereafter NRO), X 5155/7; also NRO, F(M), misc. vol. 99. For ponds associated with retting see G. E. Evans, *The horse in the furrow* (1960), p. 126; and for garden remains and ponds see the example at Steeple Gidding (Cambs) in A. E. Brown and C. C. Taylor, 'Cambridgeshire earthwork survey, II', *Proc. Cambs. Anti. Soc.*, 66 (1977), pp. 85–102.

<sup>4</sup> Harvey, *Industrial archaeology of farming*, p. 64; also E. A. Martin, 'Some observations on dewponds', *Geog. J.*, 34 (1912), pp. 74–95; id., *Dewponds, history, observation and experiment* (1915); C. Hayfield and P. Wagner, 'From dolines to dewponds: a study of water supplies on the Yorkshire Wolds', *Landscape Hist.*, 17 (1995), pp. 49–64. It is worth pointing out that dewponds seem to have been designed for the collection of water mainly derived from rainfall, snow melt or run-off but of course there

would have been minute accumulations of dew which would have added to this supply.

<sup>5</sup> NRO, Collyweston X 580.

<sup>6</sup> NRO, map 4527 (c. 1619) and map 763 (c. 1732). In Norfolk natural depressions were seen as the product of solution hollows and periglacial features, see H. Prince, 'The origins of pits and depressions in Norfolk', *Geography* 49 (1964), pp. 15–32 and the comments about the use of springs and their modification in Derbyshire in A. Harris, *Industrial archaeology of the Peak District* (1971), pp. 146–7.

<sup>7</sup> S. G. Upex 'The Roman villa at Cotterstock, Northamptonshire', *Britannia*, 32 (2001), pp. 57–91; D. F. Mackreth, 'Orton Hall Farm; a Roman and early Anglo-Saxon farmstead', *East Anglian Arch.* 76 (1996), p. 220.

<sup>8</sup> O. G. S. Crawford, *Archaeology in the field* (1960), pp. 123–31; E. Pollard, M. D. Hooper and N. W. Moore, *Hedges* (1974), p. 81; Elton Hall Library (hereafter EHL), uncatalogued Ms volume, 'Survey of Elton' (1605), fo. 63. Ponds used or constructed in the Anglo-Saxon period are also discussed by A. Everitt, *Continuity and colonization: the evolution of Kentish settlement* (1986), p. 169.

created features. Some appear to be comparatively recent, others are linked to the enclosure of land at various times while others still are clearly of a pre-enclosure date and related to the open fields of the area.

The recent decline in the numbers of ponds caused by modern mechanization and the drive for increasing field size has now been halted. The uses of ponds have changed from their original functions of watering stock and aiding drainage. The present interest in ponds relates more to their ecological and landscape amenity functions. Recent research shows that they provide an important biodiversity resource, accommodating over half of all British wetland plant species, while at the same time one in seven ponds are used for leisure activities including fishing and shooting or are deemed to enhance the 'scenic value in the landscape'.<sup>9</sup>

## I

The study area for this research was 26 parishes that straddle the Cambridgeshire – Northamptonshire border. Their entire area was field-walked and their ponds mapped. Other adjacent parishes were either partly walked or investigated in a more piecemeal fashion for their ponds' distributions and survival. The area under study is shown in Figure 1 and consists of a section of the Nene Valley to the south-west of Peterborough. The river Nene cuts a shallow alluvial valley through the area with clayland soils on either side, rising up to just over a height of sixty meters. On either side of the river Nene, subsidiary valleys such as that formed by the Willow Brook to the west and the Billing Brook on the east, cut into the clays. To the east of the claylands the ground falls away to the fens and the soils become alluvial and peat based.<sup>10</sup>

Ponds within the nine parishes of Ashton, Tansor, Warmington (Northants.) and Elton, Stibbington, Water Newton, Chesterton, Haddon and Morborne (Cambs.) were plotted from the early editions of the OS six inch and twenty-five inch maps, from field investigation, from air photographs and from oral accounts from farmers who remember ponds on their land which had, at the time of the survey, been filled in.<sup>11</sup> Such survey methods cannot guarantee that they create a picture of all the ponds that ever existed within the area and there is clearly no way of checking how accurate the survey method was in this respect. All of this information however gave a detailed plot of the potential numbers and the distribution of ponds within the parishes. This overall plot is shown in Figure 2 which includes both field ponds and, although outside of the scope of this paper, identified medieval ponds such as the ones at Elton and

<sup>9</sup> See 'Wildlife and countryside research programme-lowland pond survey 1996: final report' at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countrysidesprog/findings>.

<sup>10</sup> C. P. Chatwin, *British regional geology: East Anglia and adjoining regions* (1961); Williamson, *Shaping medieval landscapes*, fig. 8.

<sup>11</sup> OS maps covering the area at a scale of 1:2500 and 1:10,560 which show ponds in detail are held by Peterborough Museum. The first editions of the six inch to the mile maps for the area are dated 1894–6 and the first editions of the twenty-five inch to the mile maps are

dated between 1880–7. The second editions of both county sets of maps run from 1898–1901. The sets of OS maps were thought, for the purposes of this research, to be the first reliable and systematic record of ponds; earlier tithe and manuscript maps rarely show ponds other than in exceptional cases as at Maxey (see n. 3). Air photographs taken for the Nene Valley Archaeological Research Committee are also held at Peterborough Museum. Additional photographs for the area are held in the National Monuments Record, Swindon, especially the RAF vertical series taken between 1940–47.

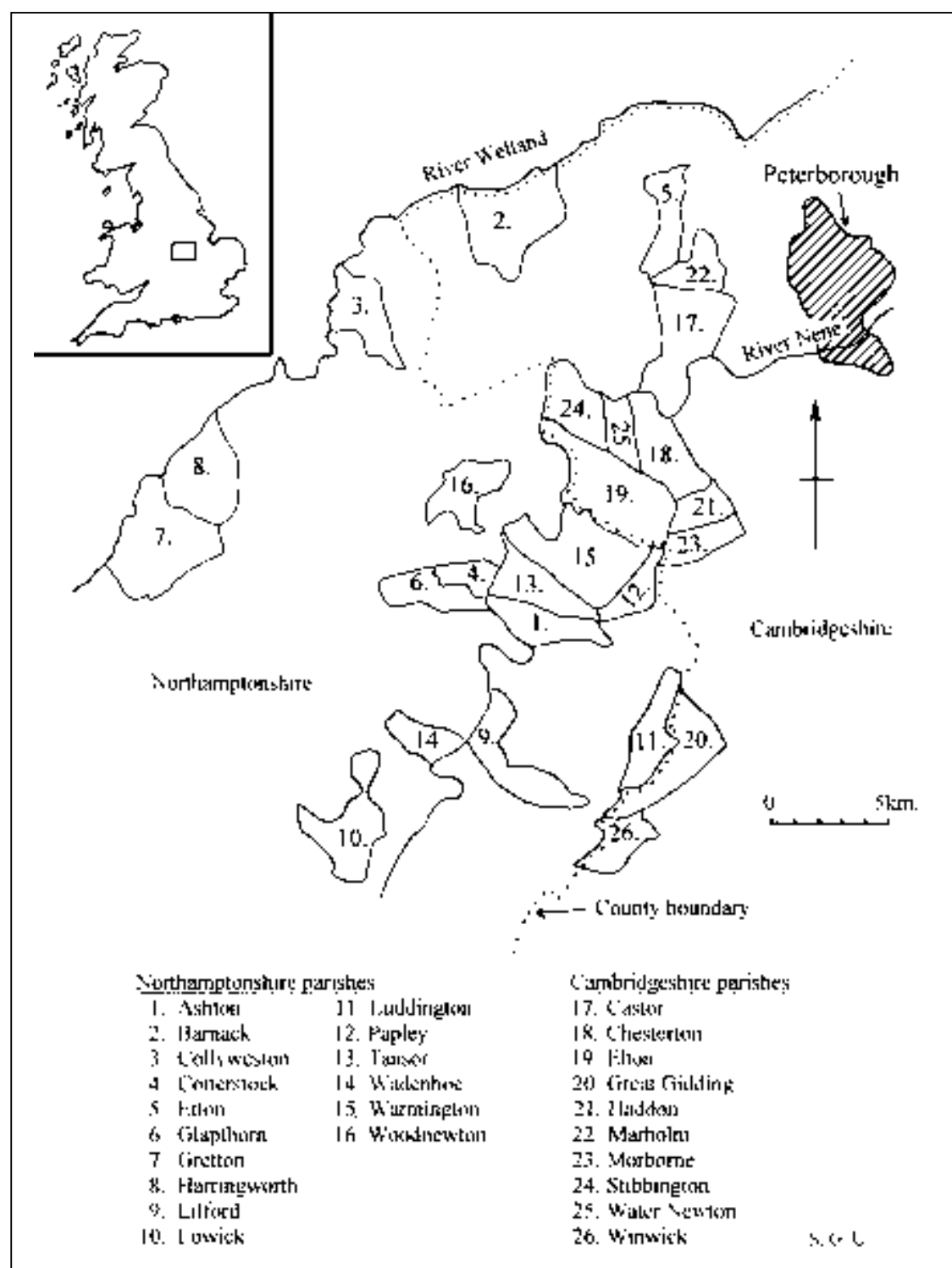


FIGURE 1. Location of parishes referred to in the text.

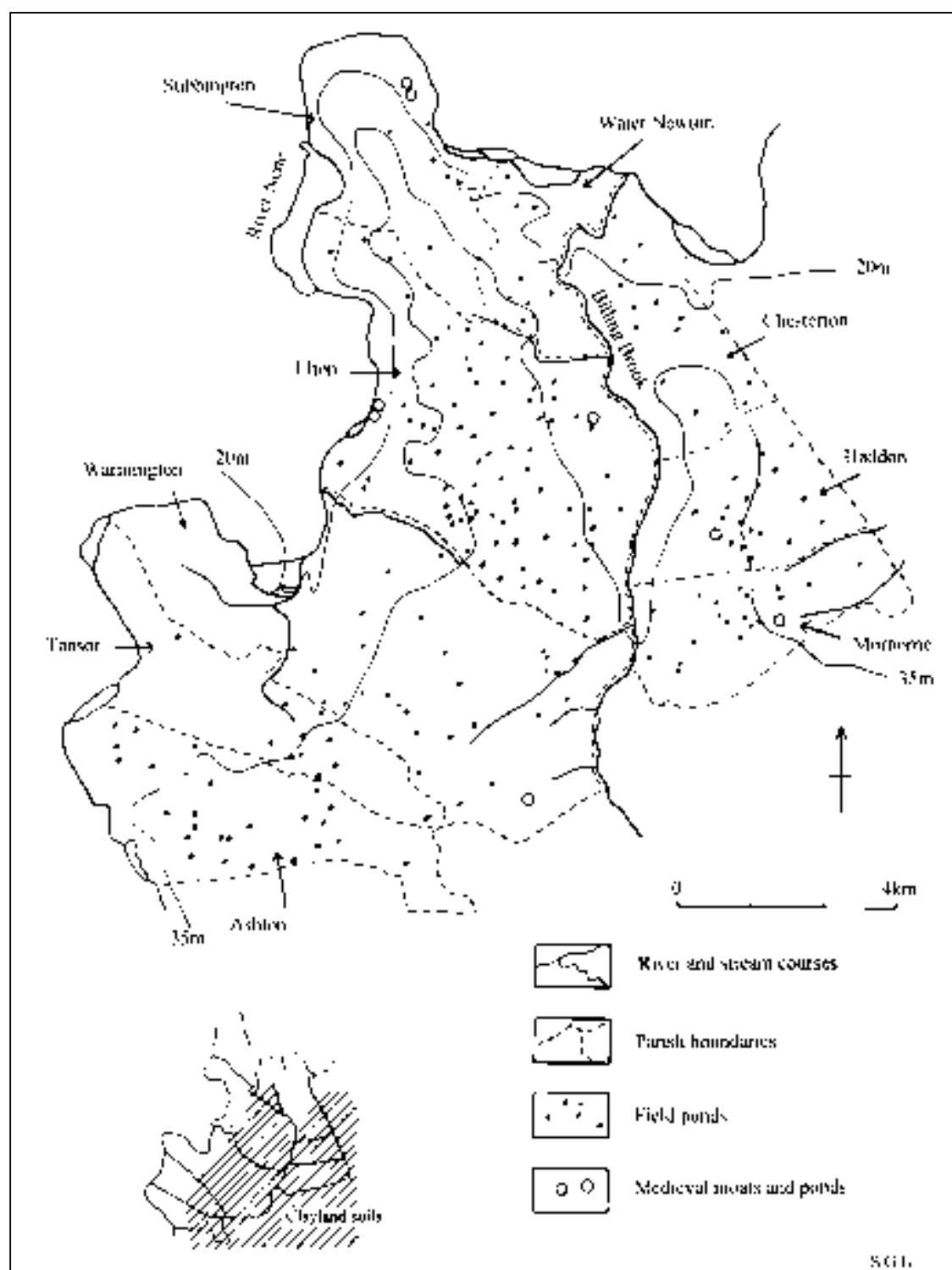


FIGURE 2. Pond distributions for nine parishes.

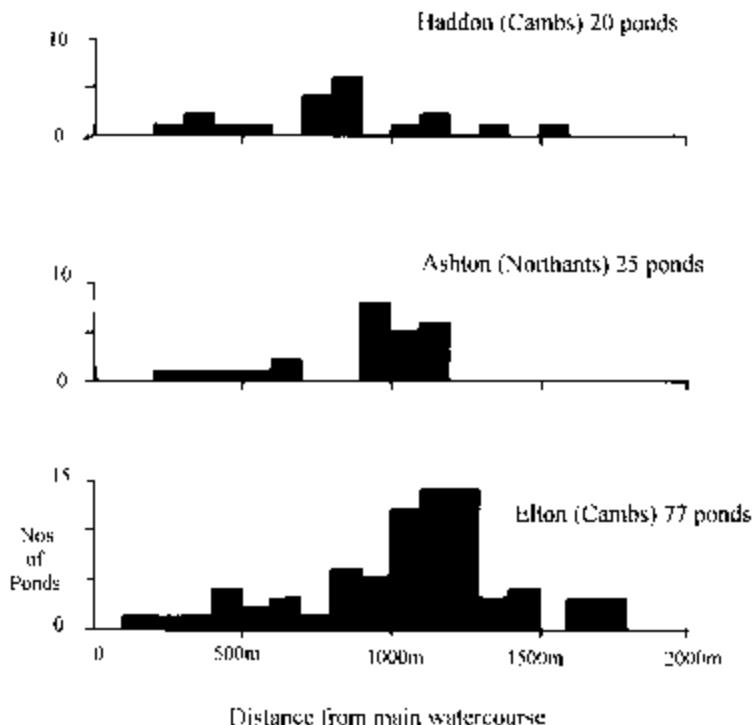


FIGURE 3. Distance decay from analysis of ponds within the parishes of Haddon, Ashton and Elton.

Haddon.<sup>12</sup> The overall distribution of field ponds within Figure 2 indicate that most were located on the clayland soils. In the whole of Elton parish for example 77 ponds were recorded, of which 15 (19.4 per cent) were associated with soils derived from the limestone of the Great Oolitic Series while the remaining sixty-two (80.5 per cent) ponds were sited on soils found on the Oxford and boulder clays.<sup>13</sup> In addition to the geological bias in the sample, there also appears to be a link between the siting of ponds and their relationship to adjoining watercourses where they appear to be at some distance from streams and rivers. The ponds in the parishes that border the Billing Brook for example, such as Haddon, Morbourn and Elton, all have their ponds set at some distance away from this stream course (see Figure 2). Further analysis of this idea is shown in Figure 3 where a simple distance decay analysis has been employed.<sup>14</sup> Here the total number of ponds for the three parishes has been plotted against the distance of the ponds from the nearest watercourse. This clearly shows that the further one moves from the watercourses the greater the number of ponds. At Elton, of the 77 recorded ponds there are just three ponds

<sup>12</sup> D. F. Mackreth, 'The abbot of Ramsey's manor at Elton', *Northamptonshire Arch.* 26 (1995), pp. 123–39; S. G. Upex, 'A note of two clayland parishes to the west of Peterborough', *Aerial Arch.* 2 (1978), pp. 32–6.

<sup>13</sup> Institute of Geological Sciences, Drift series, sheet 171.

<sup>14</sup> For a general review of the usefulness of distance decay analysis, see M. G. Bradford and W. A. Kent, *Human geography: theories and their applications* (1977), ch. 8; F. J. Monkhouse and H. R. Wilkinson, *Maps and diagrams, their compilation and construction* (1976), ch. 4.

within 400 meters of watercourses but the pond numbers increase with distance until there are 42 ponds between a distance of 1000 meters and 1300 meters.<sup>15</sup> This indicates that the ponds could have had an integral role to play in both the control of water and the provision of water for the grazing of livestock and for draft animals within the landscape. A distinctive type of pond, which it has been claimed was specifically developed for the watering of stock on the clays of south-west Cambridgeshire, west Suffolk and parts of the former county of Huntingdonshire is the 'armed pond'. These are simply ponds dug in a 'star pattern' with three to six arms extending out from a central large area of water. They are associated with pre-parliamentary enclosures and their shape is thought to enable larger herds of cattle to take water at any one time. In addition they occur at the junctions of fields, with the arms extending along the adjoining boundaries. A pond of this type at Lilford (Northants.) (see Figure 1) and another within the adjoining parish of Thurning (Northants.) have both been surveyed during the course of this study.<sup>16</sup>

## II

The dates at which ponds were created are difficult to establish unless there is direct archival reference to particular ponds being dug. Such explicit evidence is hard to discover (and where it is found, it may not be possible to connect it to surviving or documented ponds). Otherwise we have to rely on relative dating methods. M. W. Beresford and J. K. St Joseph pointed out that some of the surviving ponds are clearly of a pre-enclosure date and related to open field balks and strips. They say that these are 'not modern ponds dug to water animals out at pasture, for modern ponds lie in the field corners and can often be shown to cut through the pattern of medieval ploughing'.<sup>17</sup> The clear distinction in date is linked to the relationship of the pond and the hedge-lines of the enclosure period. Ponds that are bisected by hedge-lines were possibly created at the time of, or after the enclosure to provide water to either of the two or more adjacent fields. Pre-enclosure ponds on the other hand could be found within the central parts of the enclosed fields and at a distance from the hedge-lines.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Clearly there are problems here in associating active present day watercourses with those of past periods. It is generally assumed that the watertable of the areas on either side of the River Nene has been lowered by navigation improvements. See for example H. J. K. Jenkins, 'A survey of the River Nene in the reign of James I', *Northants Past and Present*, 8 (1992), pp. 190–6.

<sup>16</sup> O. Rackham, *Haley Wood: its history and ecology* (1975); O. Rackham, 'Armed ponds of Cambridgeshire', *Nature in Cambridgeshire*, 2 (1963), pp. 25–7; G. F. Peterken, 'Earthworks', in R. C. Steele and R. C. Welch (eds), *Monks Wood: a nature reserve record* (1973), pp. 36–9. The armed ponds at Lilford-cum-Wigsthope (TL 064815) and Thurning (TL 088829) are both typical of this class of pond – the latter is shown on the enclosure map of the parish dated 1839 (NRO, map 3008 a-e).

<sup>17</sup> M. W. Beresford and J. K. St. Joseph, *Medieval*

*England: an aerial survey* (1979), p. 64.

<sup>18</sup> Even here there are problems with the dating. At Papley, a hamlet of Warmington (Northants), ponds are associated with enclosure hedges which vary in their date. In addition a map of 1802 shows that later sub-divisions of some of the larger closes straddle the positions of pre-enclosure ponds, giving them the appearance of ponds dug in association with the enclosing phase. See, I. S. Leadham, *The domesday of inclosure 1517–1518* (2 vols, 1897), I, p. 277; M. W. Beresford, *The lost villages of England* (1963), p. 75; RCHM, *An inventory of the historical monuments in the county of Northamptonshire: north-east Northants* (1975), p. xli; Huntingdonshire Record Office (hereafter HRO), 'Map of Papley by J. Thorpe' (1802); NRO, map 2221; NRO, map 1108 (Warmington, 1621). The hedge lines at Papley are also outlined by C. C. Taylor, *Fields in the English landscape* (1975), pp. 116–17.

TABLE 1. Pond numbers within nine parishes and their locations.

| <i>Parish</i> | <i>Total number of all ponds</i> | <i>Pond on openfield headland</i> |          | <i>Pond on open-field headland linked to enclosure hedgeline</i> |          | <i>Pond on enclosure hedge-line</i> |          | <i>Pond associated with springs and watercourses</i> |          | <i>Ponds with central field positions</i> |          |
|---------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------------|----------|
|               |                                  | <i>n</i>                          | <i>%</i> | <i>n</i>                                                         | <i>%</i> | <i>n</i>                            | <i>%</i> | <i>n</i>                                             | <i>%</i> | <i>n</i>                                  | <i>%</i> |
| Ashton        | 25                               | 14                                | 56.0     | 2                                                                | 8.0      | 2                                   | 8.0      | 4                                                    | 16.0     | 3                                         | 12.0     |
| Chesterton    | 15                               | 6                                 | 40.0     | 4                                                                | 26.6     | 0                                   |          | 4                                                    | 26.6     | 1                                         | 6.6      |
| Elton         | 77                               | 29                                | 37.6     | 19                                                               | 24.6     | 14                                  | 18.1     | 6                                                    | 7.7      | 9                                         | 11.6     |
| Haddon        | 20                               | 10                                | 50.0     | 3                                                                | 15.0     | 1                                   | 5.0      | 4                                                    | 20.0     | 2                                         | 10.0     |
| Morborne      | 19                               | 10                                | 52.6     | 4                                                                | 21.0     | 0                                   |          | 4                                                    | 21.0     | 1                                         | 5.2      |
| Stibbington   | 9                                | 5                                 | 55.5     | 2                                                                | 22.2     | 0                                   |          | 1                                                    | 11.1     | 1                                         | 11.1     |
| Tansor        | 11                               | 5                                 | 45.4     | 2                                                                | 18.1     | 1                                   | 9.0      | 2                                                    | 18.1     | 1                                         | 9.0      |
| Warmington    | 27                               | 13                                | 48.1     | 5                                                                | 18.5     | 2                                   | 7.4      | 5                                                    | 18.5     | 2                                         | 7.4      |
| W/Newton      | 9                                | 4                                 | 44.4     | 2                                                                | 22.2     | 0                                   |          | 3                                                    | 33.3     | 0                                         |          |
| TOTALS        | 212                              | 96                                | 47.7     | 43                                                               | 19.5     | 20                                  | 6.4      | 33                                                   | 15.5     | 20                                        | 9.4      |

Table 1 provides some comment on the relationship of pond locations and their association with five different sets of features. This shows that for all of the parishes which have been covered by detailed fieldwork and analysis, 47.7 per cent of ponds relate to open field headlands. A further 19.5 per cent are associated with both open field headlands and enclosure hedge-lines while only 6.4 per cent of ponds are linked with enclosure hedge-lines. This indicates that most ponds within the sample area are in fact pre-enclosure in date. Even if the figures for ponds associated with open field headlands / enclosure hedge-lines (where a pre- or post-enclosure date is uncertain – Table 1, col. 3) and those linked with certainly dated enclosure hedge-lines (Table 1, col. 5) are amalgamated, the total number of ponds of certain or probable post-enclosure date within the sample is still only 25.9 per cent.

At Elton, which was enclosed in 1779, of the 77 field ponds that have been recorded, 29 (37.6 per cent) were related to the headlands of the open field furlongs as reconstructed by linking field survey work, aerial photography and a complete terrier of the parish made in 1747.<sup>19</sup> These ponds had no relationship to the hedges of the parliamentary enclosure period or to earlier enclosures within the parish. In addition nineteen ponds (24.6 per cent) were related both to pre-enclosure furlong boundaries and the hedge-lines of the enclosure period. Here it was difficult to tell which came first – the headland with a pond along it, which at the enclosure had a hedge-line added – or the pond being added to a hedge-line (already sited on a headland) during the enclosure or in the post-enclosure period. Most of the ponds within this category were associated with early piecemeal enclosures within the parish and the earlier enclosures in

<sup>19</sup> Statute 17 Geo. III, c. 34, enclosure map dated 1784, HRO, pm 2/5; EHL, uncatalogued Ms volume 'Wing's survey of Elton, 1747'.

the area of the Park at Elton. In some instances it may well have been the case that pre-enclosure headlands with ponds influenced the early enclosure surveyors in the orientation or siting of the hedge-lines so that they could bisect a pond. Fourteen ponds (18.1 per cent) related exclusively to enclosure hedge-lines.

A further six ponds at Elton (7.7 per cent) were sited along slades or stream courses and were directly related to springs.<sup>20</sup> The remaining nine ponds (11.6 per cent) were sited in the middle of fields and had no relationship to either pre- or post-enclosure features. In some cases fieldwork showed that ponds cut through and therefore post-date open field ridge and furrow as was the case of a small pond at Wadenhoe (Northants.).<sup>21</sup>

A sample of the landscape in Elton parish is shown in Figure 4 where 25 ponds are represented. Of these, eleven ponds can be seen to be associated with headlands of the open fields, nine relate both to headlands and enclosure hedges, one pond related to a slade and four ponds were sited in the middle of fields and away from headlands.

Using the simple rule of thumb set out by Beresford and St Joseph in 1979, that the relationship of ponds to hedge-lines and open field headlands is an indication of date, it could be argued that nearly half of the remaining ponds (47.7 per cent) in the sample parishes are pre-enclosure in origin.<sup>22</sup> This figure is certainly also higher if some of the ponds associated with both headlands and hedge-lines are taken into account.

Some ponds are also very recent in their origins. At Elton, of the nine ponds found within the middle of fields, two were created out of bomb craters of Second World War date. C. C. Taylor has given other explanations for recent pond creation including ponded depressions forming over mass animal burials.<sup>23</sup>

Work has been carried out in detail in other local parishes which confirms the same dating conclusions. There are numerous cases of ponds being directly related to pre-enclosure headlands. At Ashton (Northants.) for example, ponds are located at regular intervals along the former headlands of the open field furlongs and the same arrangement has been recorded in other parts of Northamptonshire and Leicestershire.<sup>24</sup> Of the few ponds that are shown on pre-enclosure maps, such as that at Kimbolton (Cambs.) in 1591 and the Hog Pond at Barnack (Northants.) in the eighteenth century, all are shown on the balks, headlands and access ways between the furlongs.<sup>25</sup>

There is a distinction between the ponds in parishes that are linked to the early enclosure of land and those ponds which are related to the later parliamentary enclosures within the area. At Chesterton, Haddon, Morborne and Water Newton, which were all enclosed by piecemeal agreements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and within parts of Elton and Stibington where early enclosures have been identified, the ponds in the areas of these early

<sup>20</sup> See S. G. Upex, 'The reconstruction of open-field layout from landscape evidence in Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 1984), ch. 5.

<sup>21</sup> See RCHM, *North-east Northants*, p. 103.

<sup>22</sup> Beresford and St. Joseph, *Medieval England*, p. 65.

<sup>23</sup> Information from the late Mr. S. Mason of Elton. C. C. Taylor, *Fieldwork in medieval archaeology* (1974),

p. 27.

<sup>24</sup> Beresford and St Joseph, *Medieval England*, p. 274.

<sup>25</sup> HRO, 341. L. 13 (Kimbolton, 1591); NRO, map 4040. See also part of the 1756 map published by Hooke for the parish of Kinwarton (Warw.) which shows ponds along furlong boundaries. D. Hooke, 'The relationship between ridge and furrow and mapped strip holdings', *Landscape Hist.*, 13 (1991), pp. 69–71.

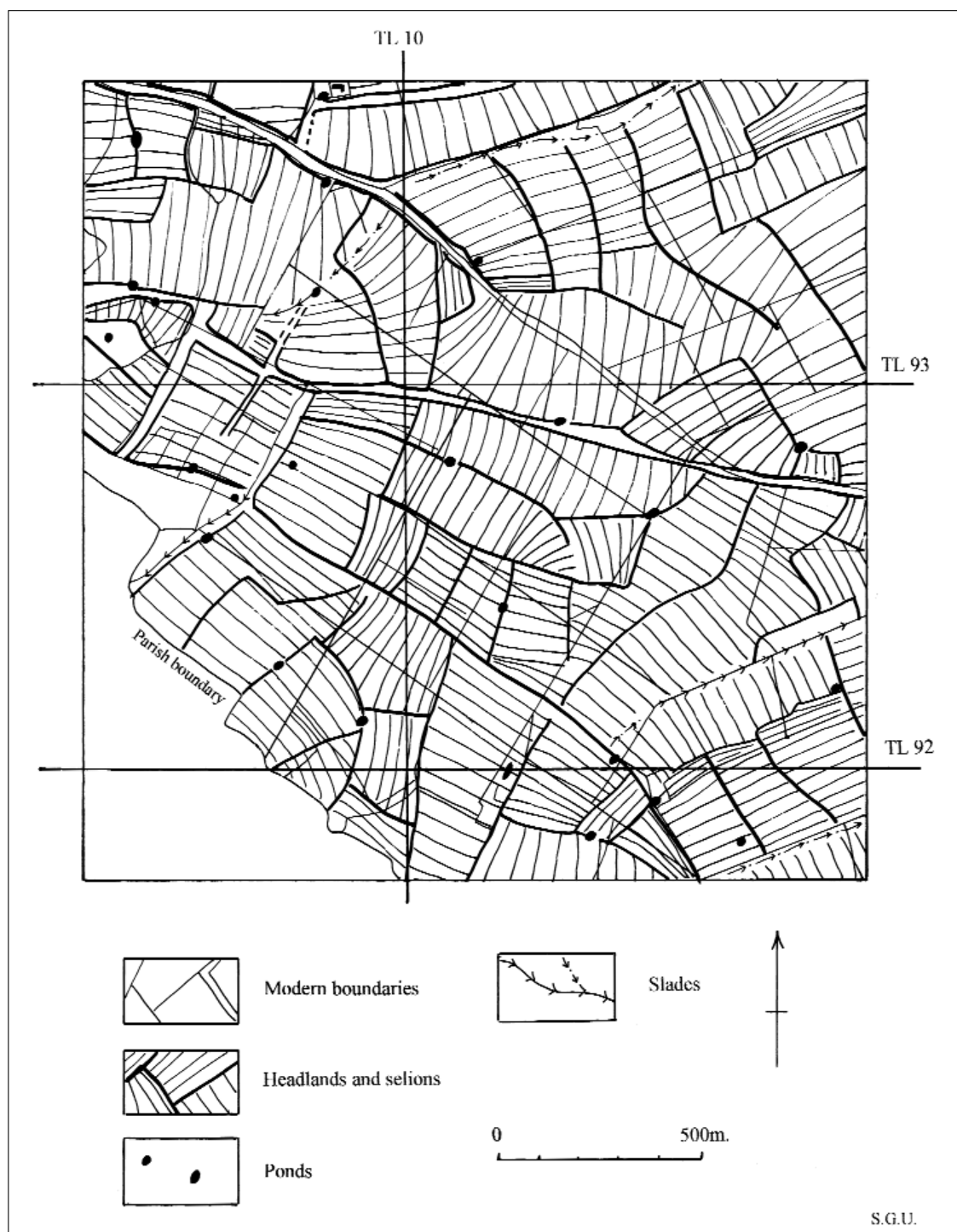


FIGURE 4. Detailed pond analysis of part of Elton Parish

Source: Fieldwork carried out during 1984–85. Aerial photographs held in Peterborough Museum archive.

enclosure are largely associated with open-field headlands on which the later hedge-lines of the enclosure were constructed. In these parishes there are few or no ponds which relate just to enclosure hedge-lines. This contrasts with other, later, Parliamentary enclosed parishes such as Warmington, Tansor, Ashton and the larger part of Elton, where the ponds link slightly more with hedge-lines and where there are fewer ponds (in percentage terms) which are sited on headlands linked to later hedge-lines. The implication here is that the earlier enclosures of the pre-parliamentary period were of whole furlongs and the newly created fields fossilized to some extent this furlong pattern. Such enclosures also therefore incorporated the existing open field headland ponds into their new hedge-lines. In some cases new ponds seem to have been dug during the process of this piecemeal enclosure as may be shown at Elton.<sup>26</sup> During the later period of Parliamentary enclosure, where whole areas were enclosed with little respect to pre-enclosure arrangements of furlongs and their existing ponds, the newly created fields and hedge-lines ignored pond positions for the most part.<sup>27</sup>

### III

It is not clear when most of the pre-enclosure ponds were created. Some are related to springs and are natural features, but of the artificially created ones some are of considerable antiquity and could be Roman or even pre-Roman in date.<sup>28</sup> Most however could have been created as watering places for livestock and draft animals at the same time as the open fields were being expanded and are therefore likely to be of medieval date. Ponds with names such as 'New Pond' first recorded at Wollaston (Northants.) in 1788 could already have been of considerable age by this time.<sup>29</sup> Equally impossible to date is the original date of 'Old Pond' in Castor parish shown on a map of 1846.<sup>30</sup>

Springs of water were not only useful for watering stock but they could also be problematic in terms of flooding. This aspect is indicated by a court order made in 1659 for Lowick (Northants.) where the Jury stated that 'every inhabitant that hath any ground neere unto the springs or quagmires in any of the said fields shall at their own cost and charge keepe the said spring and quagmires sufficiently scoured so the fields be not anoyed by them ...'.<sup>31</sup> Michael Havinden recorded a case from late seventeenth-century Oxfordshire where ponds were dug to provide water on furlongs which were temporarily withdrawn from the arable rotation of a parish and sown with sainfoin. The problem of water for stock within such furlongs was solved

<sup>26</sup> EHL, uncatalogued Ms volume, 'Account book of Sir Thomas Proby', fo. 126.

<sup>27</sup> The dates of the enclosures are as follows: Chester-ton, 1650 (HRO, Glebe terriers, I, A-D); Haddon, 1808 but with earlier enclosures taking place in the 1640s–50s (HRO, map 1808); Morborne, no known award but totally enclosed by 1808 (HRO, map 1808); Water New-ton, no known award but totally enclosed by 1674 (HRO, Acc. 590); Elton enclosed by private Act of Par-liament in 1784 (HRO, pm 2/5). Earlier enclosure in the 'Park' and the area of Sheepwalk Farm were taking place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (see Upex

'Reconstructions', pp. 84–93); Stibbington, enclosed in 1810 (HRO, pm 4/15) but earlier enclosures are shown on a map of 1770 (HRO, pm 4/13). Warmington, Tansor and Ashton were all enclosed by parliamentary act and had no areas of 'ancient enclosures' other than small areas surrounding the village sites. Warmington, 1774 (NRO map 2864); Tansor 1778 (NRO, map 4608) and Ashton 1810 (NRO, map 2858).

<sup>28</sup> Mackreth, 'Orton Hall Farm', p. 220.

<sup>29</sup> D. Hall, *Wollaston: portrait of a village* (1977), p. 153.

<sup>30</sup> NRO, map T236.

<sup>31</sup> NRO, SS. 3284

by 'all persons having a right of common on the sainfoin [to] contribute towards the digging of a pond'.<sup>32</sup>

Enclosures at Elton made in the late seventeenth century in the area of the 'Park' were also provided with ponds for stock watering. Several references are given in Sir Thomas Proby's account book for 1668–9 for payments 'given to the labour[er]s at the pond working', to 'R. Thomson 16 days with his cart and 2 horses and a boy at the pond forming ...' and 'to the labour[er]s at the hill ground pond'.<sup>33</sup> Similarly at Lamport (Northants.) in 1576 the 'making of pooles' was done at the same time that large enclosures were made for sheep farming.<sup>34</sup> New ponds were also being dug in the vale of Pickering during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the enclosure of land and in the East Riding of Yorkshire.<sup>35</sup>

At Glapthorne (Northants.) a series of three court orders of 1569 indicate that ponds were being maintained within the 'neats pasture' for the watering of cattle. The first order states that 'the ponds in the neats pastures be cast and cleaned by Matynmass daie next and that all laborers in ye said tenour [tenure] be redie at the said work 4 days at such time as they shallbe summoned by the jury in pain of every laborer in defalt to cost for every daie absent 12*d.*'. An additional order then goes onto add that, 'every husbandman [should] be redy with their carts to qarie [quarry] stone for ye mending and clening of ye said ponds in payn to cost every man being absent with his syd cart 2*d.*'. The last order adds still further detail to the planned pond workings by stating, 'It[em], It is agreed that in every house throughout the town shallbe apoynted and set forth to gather stones for the said ponds before Maryynmas at such time as the house shallbe called there in payn for everi household making defalt to cost 12*d.*'.<sup>36</sup> There is no indication in these orders to show what the stone, which must have been either quarry stone or stone collected off the fields, was used for. It may have been to form some type of embankment around the ponds to act as a dam or it may have been to cover the base of the pond so as to make some form of hard standing for the cattle to walk on as they drank.<sup>37</sup> Whatever the reason for the stone, the work had to be carried out before Martinmas Day (11 November) when the pasture would be less productive and access would not ruin the earlier crop of grass.

Earlier accounts of ponds being either made or constructed are rare. In most cases it remains unclear if the references are referring to ponds within enclosed or unenclosed areas or even within settlement areas. In 1354 for example, John Polebrok was fined 3*d.* because 'he did not come to make the pond' at Elton.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>32</sup> M. A. Havinden, 'Agricultural progress in open field Oxfordshire', *AgHR* 9 (1961), pp. 76–7.

<sup>33</sup> EHL, uncatalogued Ms volume, 'Account book of Sir Thomas Proby', fo. 126.

<sup>34</sup> M. Finch, *The wealth of five Northamptonshire families, 1540–1640* (1956), p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> E. Kerridge, *The agricultural revolution* (1967), p. 240; A. Harris, *The rural landscape of the East Riding of Yorkshire, 1700–1850* (1961), p. 72.

<sup>36</sup> NRO, Bru. I, V, 61.

<sup>37</sup> It is unfortunate that the area of the 'neats pasture'

remains unlocated – unless of course it was a reference to some form of rotated commonable grassland. Early maps of the parish of Glapthorne do not show any area referred to as 'neats pasture' but there is an area called 'Cowpasture' on pre-enclosure maps of 1614 (NRO, map 4526/1) and 1635 (NRO, map 2991/5). None of the maps show ponds in the Cowpasture and recent fieldwork in the area has failed to locate any ponds that would link with these earlier references.

<sup>38</sup> PRO, SC2/178/35.

## IV

How ponds were integrated into the overall management of the open fields remains a mystery. There are no surviving court orders linking ponds to open field management for any of the parishes within this study.<sup>39</sup> Clearly draft animals would need watering during the periods when the open fields were being ploughed and ponds at a distance from the watercourses would have been useful for this purpose. Grazing stock would also need a water supply when the fields were laid down to fallow and again ponds would have been used. The supply of water provided by ponds would also presumably have been taken into account when the fallow was temporarily fenced by the 'hurldemasters'. In court orders for Elton throughout the seventeenth century, hurdles were required from all of the tenants with common rights on the fallow. For example, John Southgate was fined in October 1677 for 'not laying out his full number of hurdles against the order' along with two other tenants.<sup>40</sup>

It seems probable that the majority of ponds within open and enclosed fields were for watering animals. However, there are other possible reasons for their creation. Pits made for the digging of marl so that it could be spread on the fields, a practice which is clearly indicated by several writers, could come to hold water.<sup>41</sup> In Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire marl digging is mentioned for parishes such as at Winwick (Cambs.) where 'large old delves ... [had been] ... digged for marle' before 1721.<sup>42</sup> At Braybooke the positions of marl pits have also been identified as remaining pond sites.<sup>43</sup> A series of marl pits have recently been excavated at Great Houghton in Northamptonshire. These pits, which follow the lines of medieval furrows within the open fields, were clearly being cut in the thirteen and fourteenth centuries and would have ponded water although they appear to have been filled in at a later date.<sup>44</sup>

Other forms of digging and quarrying also seem to have produced ponds within field areas. Fieldwork in the parish of Etton in the Welland valley (Cambs.) shows that small ponds now fill former quarry sites that were dug at an unknown period for gravel and sand. These small ponds were located exclusively along the former headlands and balks of the former open fields within the parish and must date to some point before the enclosure of the open fields in 1819.<sup>45</sup> Amongst additional reasons for making ponds is the need to soak material such as thatch, straw and thistles before it could be used as a manure. However by the late eighteenth century the benefits of this practice were considered to be of little value by commentators such as Arthur Young.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>39</sup> At Elton for example the court orders run, with only few breaks, from the thirteen century to the time of the enclosure in the late eighteenth century. However the few references to ponds that do occur, such as that to 'Halpond' in 1520 (PRO, SC2/179/85) or to 'Codwell Pond' (EHL, uncatalogued Ms volume, 'Survey of Elton, 1605', fo. 63), only name the ponds as reference points and do not mention any aspect of their management.

<sup>40</sup> EHL, uncatalogued court orders, 11 Oct. 1677.

<sup>41</sup> Kerridge, *Agricultural revolution*, pp. 244–49.

<sup>42</sup> J. Morton, *The natural history of Northamptonshire*

(1712), p. 61.

<sup>43</sup> M. W. Beresford, 'Ridge and furrow and the open fields', *ECHR* 1 (1948), pp. 34–45.

<sup>44</sup> A. Chapman, 'Excavation of an Iron Age settlement and a Middle Saxon cemetery at Great Houghton, 1966', *Northamptonshire Arch.*, 29 (2001), p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> NRO, map 4540, 1–6.

<sup>46</sup> R. Lennard, 'English agriculture under Charles II', *ECHR* 4 (1934), p. 33; Kerridge, *Agricultural revolution*, pp. 180–240; A. Young, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Lincolnshire* (1813), p. 267.

Some ponds recorded during modern field survey work were seen to be linked to furlong drains and gutters created within the former open fields.<sup>47</sup> In such cases the ponds could well have acted as sumps or soakaways. At Haddon (Cambs) on the heavy soils derived from the Oxford and boulder clays, areas of surviving ridge and furrow from the common fields had furlong gutters dug around and along headlands and balks which linked with ponds in a complex drainage pattern (Figure 5). It is difficult to say with certainty that the Haddon drainage system was a contemporary open field feature but the layout of the furlongs and gutters, and their relationship with the ponds, suggests that this was the case.<sup>48</sup>

Archival details related to the digging and the maintenance of such furlong gutters and drains is limited. Occasionally there are references in manorial court proceedings to gutters, drains and ditches but it is often unclear exactly where these were sited in relation to the furlongs.<sup>49</sup> There are references to 'common ditches' which do seem to be within the furlong systems at Luddington (Northants) in 1713. At Woodnewton (Northants.) in 1620, court orders were issued instructing individuals to 'cleanse common gutters and drains'.<sup>50</sup> The court orders for Elton also refer to common drains within the arable fields. In 1674, 1676 and 1678 orders state that '... everyone drain his common ditches sufficiently under pain of 2s. 6d.'. <sup>51</sup> At Maxey in 1714 a dyke system recorded on a contemporary map had been dug along the side of a wet furlong and truncated the ends of the selions.<sup>52</sup> Such patterns of furlong drains with their links to ponds are very different to the drainage systems which operated within nineteenth-century enclosed fields or meadow areas.<sup>53</sup> How effective as soak-a-ways ponds were on the heavy clay soils of the area is uncertain but the practice was outlined for Norfolk in the late eighteenth century by William Marshall who describes pits dug and lined with branches and used as field soakaways.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>47</sup> See Upex, 'Reconstructions' pp. 265–76.

<sup>48</sup> The date of the enclosure of Haddon remains uncertain. The parish was totally enclosed by 1808 (HRO, map 1808) and prior to this a glebe terrier of 1703 indicates a four-field layout (HRO, Glebe terriers, I, A–D). However, accounts of 1648 and 1654 suggest that partial enclosure was already underway in the mid-seventeenth century (HRO, Dryden coll, D (CA) 304, 305). Ground surveys of the area were made during 1983 and since then the ridge and furrow has been ploughed. Air photographs of the furlongs in this area are lodged at Peterborough Museum.

<sup>49</sup> See for example NRO, Acc. 1972/179–/1109; BL, Add. Ch. 25811; NRO, map 1093 (Castor 1843).

<sup>50</sup> NRO, Montage coll., misc. ledger 145; Westmoreland coll., box 5, bdle 5, no 1.

<sup>51</sup> EHL, Court book A, 1665–1728. Similar orders relating to common ditches occur in the same source in 1673, 1688 and 1719. Earlier references to common ditches at Elton also occur in 1527 (PRO, SC2/179/86); 1458 (PRO,

SC2/179/88) and 1297 (PRO, SC6/878/14, m. 10). At Messingham (Lincs.) an order of 1599 states that any inhabitants of the parish 'which have any water gutters between neighbor and neighbor shall sufficiently ditch and scower the same as oft as nede shall require'; E. Peacock, 'Notes from the court rolls of the manor of Scotter', *Archaeologia*, 46 (1881), p. 385. Some of the gutters at Kingsthorpe (Northants) were significant enough to be given names such as 'Bettes gutter', 'Pages gutter' and 'Cowkes gutter'; J. H. Glover, *Kingsthorpiana, or researches in a church chest* (1883), p. 94.

<sup>52</sup> NRO, F(M), misc. vol. 99, fo. 12.

<sup>53</sup> T. Williamson, 'Post-medieval field drainage', in Cook and Williamson (eds), *Water management*, pp. 41–52; A. D. M. Phillips, 'Arable land drainage in the nineteenth century', in id., *Water management*, pp. 53–72; Cook, 'Field-scale water management', pp. 53–66.

<sup>54</sup> W. Marshall, *The rural economy of Norfolk* (1787), p. 132.

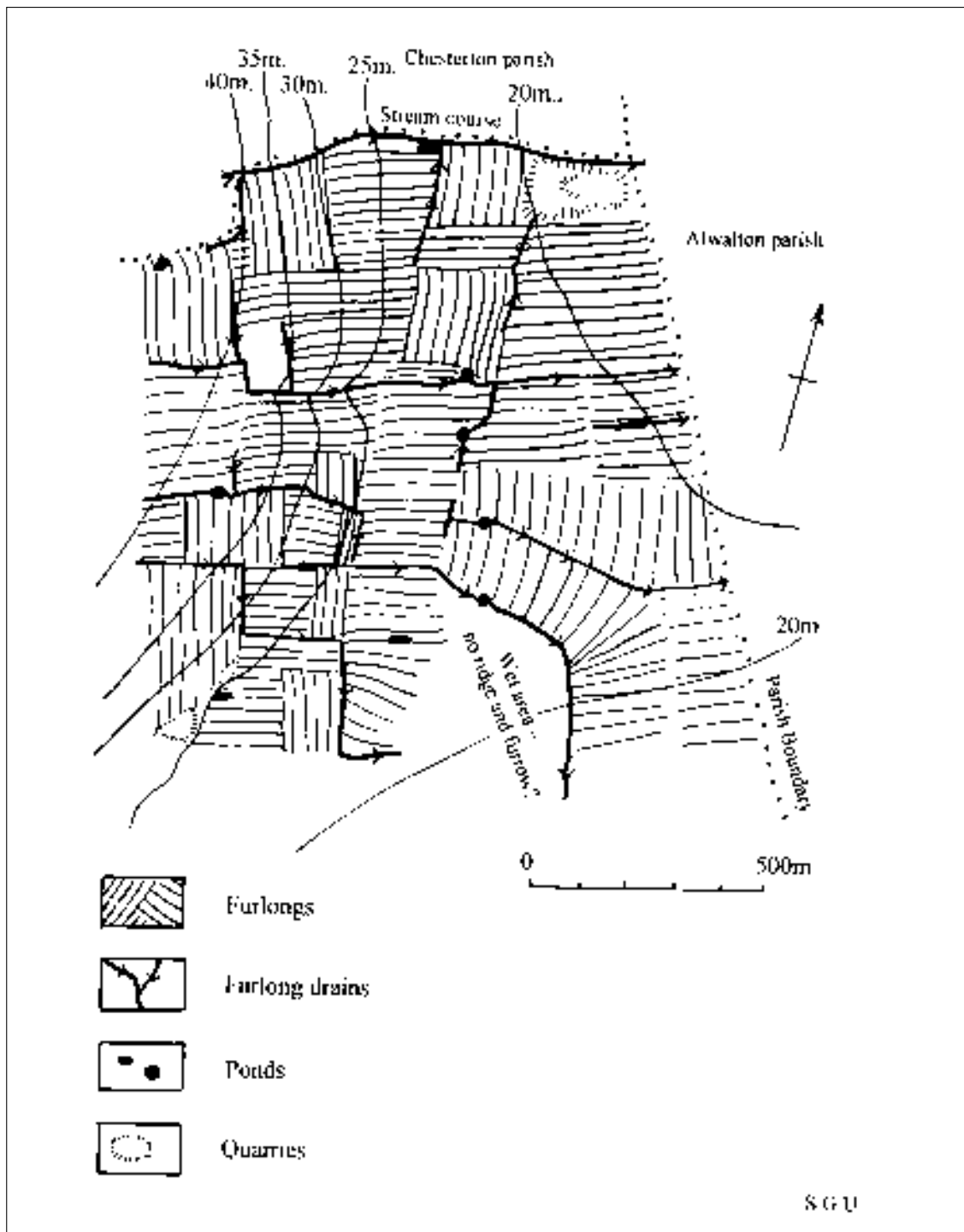


FIGURE 5. Ponds linked to furlong drainage in Haddon parish.

Source: Fieldwork carried out during 1984–85. Aerial photographs held in Peterborough Museum archive.

## V

Whilst there is little precise evidence for the dating of ponds, some are clearly of considerable antiquity while others have been created by changes within the landscape such as the enclosure of land. More research is needed to relate landscape change to pond numbers. This paper shows evidence that almost half of the ponds within the landscape could be of pre-enclosure date and relate to the workings of open field systems in which water was needed both for draft animals and also for animals grazing the fallow. In some areas of the Midlands writers have suggested an expansion in the numbers of ponds as a response to past expansions of grassland and the need to water stock, but more work is again needed here to document such developments.<sup>55</sup> The evidence that the early enclosures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries within the area of the east Midlands converted arable to grass land is clear. It seems that the construction of ponds must have gone hand in hand with such enclosures to provide water for the increased livestock that such economic changes brought.<sup>56</sup> Ponds therefore need to be considered an integral part of farming systems and one which we overlook at our peril.

<sup>55</sup> J. Broad, 'Alternative husbandry and permanent pasture in the Midlands, 1650–1800', *AgHR* 28 (1980), p. 87.

<sup>56</sup> S. Porter, 'An agricultural geography of Huntingdonshire, 1610–1749' (unpublished M.Litt thesis,

University of Cambridge, 1973), pp. 116–33. See the case outlined for Elton within the 'Park' area and at Sheepwalk Farm (n. 27), and the 'making of pooles' at Lamport (n. 34).

# The economic and social worlds of rural craftsmen-retailers in eighteenth-century Cheshire

by Jon Stobart

## Abstract

The lives and activities of rural craftsmen-retailers have long been marginal to meta-narratives of rural change and retail revolution. Only with their disappearance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century have they been regarded as important markers of more general processes. Drawing on a detailed reading of probate inventories and wills, this paper offers some new insights into the numbers, distribution and activities of rural tailors and shoemakers in eighteenth-century Cheshire. It highlights the limited capitalization of their craft activities and their close involvement with agricultural pursuits, including the ownership of livestock and husbandry ware. It also reveals the close social ties which they enjoyed with their rural communities: friends and family were primarily rural, as were their customer and credit networks.

Some twenty years ago, E. A. Wrigley outlined the growing importance of the non-agricultural rural population in England.<sup>1</sup> He argued that, by the start of the eighteenth century, one-third of the rural population gained their living by means other than farming; a figure which had risen to one-half by 1800. In certain areas – especially the Midlands and north of England – much of the ‘surplus’ labour was absorbed in rural manufacturing activity, the classic mechanism being the putting-out of work in an urban based proto-industrial regime.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the country, though, increased reliance on the market to provide goods and services encouraged growth in rural craft and retail activities.<sup>3</sup> Whilst numbers varied in accordance with local farming regimes, much of the non-agricultural workforce of eighteenth-century rural England comprised carpenters and blacksmiths, carters and shopkeepers, tailors and shoemakers. Although essential to the rural economy, village craftsmen and retailers have received relatively little attention in the recent academic literature.<sup>4</sup> For historians of shopping, they lie at the

<sup>1</sup> E. A. Wrigley, ‘Urban growth and agricultural change: England and the Continent in the early modern period’, *J. Interdisciplinary History*, 15 (1985), pp. 696–705.

<sup>2</sup> See F. Mendels, ‘Proto-industrialization: the first phase of the industrialization process’, *JEcH*, 32 (1972), pp. 241–61. Always a controversial thesis, the current state of debate is summarised well in P. Hudson, ‘Proto-industrialization in England’, in S. Ogilvie and M. Cerman (eds) *European Proto-industrialization* (1996),

pp. 49–66.

<sup>3</sup> J. de Vries, ‘Between purchasing power and the world of goods’, in J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds) *Consumption and the World of Goods* (1993), pp. 85–132.

<sup>4</sup> Amongst the rare exceptions are B. A. Holderness, ‘Rural tradesmen 1660–1850: a regional study in Lindsey’, *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*, 7 (1972), pp. 77–81 and J. Martin, ‘Village traders and the emergence of a proletariat in south Warwickshire, 1750–1851’, *AgHR* 32 (1984), pp. 179–88.

functional and geographical margins of retailing and are too easily overlooked in favour of fashionable urban shops, modern selling practices and novel goods. Eighteenth-century villagers are generally seen as living in the shadows of the city's bright lights or they are cast in entirely separate socio-cultural worlds.<sup>5</sup> For rural historians, retail activities are peripheral to meta-narratives of agricultural revolution, land reform or emergent social conflict. Only with their apparent decline in the twentieth century do rural craftsmen and retailers appear as important markers of more general processes. And yet both retailers and craftsmen were widespread within and central to life in rural communities.<sup>6</sup> Martin suggests that as many as forty or fifty per cent of households in Warwickshire were supported by craft or trading activities in the years before enclosure.<sup>7</sup> Even after the redistribution of lands and the socio-economic transformations that this brought about, lesser craftsmen such as carpenters, shoemakers and tailors comprised a significant proportion of village populations.

In contrast to their nineteenth- and twentieth-century counterparts, then, much remains obscure about the activities and lives of rural craftsmen in the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> It is useful, though, to take stock of what is known about these men. First, we know something of their changing numbers and distribution, and the ways in which these were influenced by land-holding and agricultural systems. The importance of land-ownership to the livelihoods of village tradesmen in Warwickshire meant that enclosure inevitably had a significant impact on their ability to generate adequate household income.<sup>9</sup> Whilst the same was probably true in other areas, there has been little attempt to assess this or other factors which might have influenced their distribution or prosperity.<sup>10</sup> How important was local demand and the competition or stimulus afforded by urban retailers and craftsmen?

Second, it is widely acknowledged that village craftsmen-retailers were essential in serving the needs of a rural population that, as de Vries has argued, were increasingly market oriented in both their production and consumption. Shops formed an important link to the world of goods, supplying a range of non-local wares to an ever more sophisticated set of consumers. Here, market orientation was an inevitable consequence of the demand for exotic and novel items, but was underwritten by household specialisation which meant that many basic items were purchased rather than made in the home.<sup>11</sup> The numerous tailors and shoemakers answered the same need. Although inner garments were often made up in the home using

<sup>5</sup> See H.-C. Mui and L. Mui, *Shops and shop-keeping in eighteenth-century England* (1989), pp. 148–59; N. Cox, *The complete tradesman: a study of retailing, 1550–1850* (2000), *passim*; C. Estabrook, *Urbane and rustic England* (1998).

<sup>6</sup> P. Ripley, 'Village and town: occupations and wealth in the hinterland of Gloucester, 1600–1700', *AgHR* 32 (1984), pp. 170–7; Holderness, 'Rural tradesmen', pp. 77–81.

<sup>7</sup> Martin, 'Village traders', p. 181.

<sup>8</sup> Much of what we know is based on studies undertaken ten, twenty or even thirty years ago: J. Styles, 'Clothing the North: the supply of non-elite clothing in the eighteenth-century north of England', *Textile Hist.*,

25 (1994), pp. 139–66; N. Cox, 'The distribution of retailing tradesmen in north Shropshire, 1660–1750', *J. Regional and Local Stud.*, 13 (1993), pp. 4–22; Ripley, 'Village and town'; Martin, 'Village traders'; Holderness, 'Rural tradesmen'.

<sup>9</sup> Martin 'Village traders', pp. 185–8.

<sup>10</sup> Tailors and shoemakers do not feature in J. Chartres, 'Agricultural industries', in G. E. Mingay (ed.) *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, VI, 1750–1850 (1989).

<sup>11</sup> De Vries, 'Between purchasing power'; Cox, *Complete tradesman*, esp. pp. 38–75; Styles, 'Clothing the North', pp. 151–60.

lighter fabrics, many householders chose to have outer garments as well as shoes made by specialist craftsmen. As Styles argues, this may have resulted from a lack of appropriate or finely tuned skill, but it also reflected a willingness to pay for good quality workmanship, especially given the expense of the fabrics involved.<sup>12</sup> Certainly the purchase of clothing, either ready made or bespoke, was common even amongst the lower orders of rural society by the early nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Much of this work, though, presents rural craftsmen as elements of a supply chain rather than individuals of interest in their own right. As a result, we know relatively little their own economic worlds: how they made a living and how they interacted with the mainly agricultural economy around them.

Third, it is apparent that rural craftsmen-retailers were far from being divorced from the land. Wrigley noted that some non-agricultural employment in the countryside might arise from increasing specialisation, a carter, for instance, taking on a role previously carried out part-time by a farmer.<sup>14</sup> But the carter might also have a smallholding, making the switch from agricultural to non-agricultural livelihoods still more blurred. Work by Holderness and Martin makes clear the prevalence of livestock and land-holding amongst such individuals, suggesting close ties with the agricultural economy.<sup>15</sup> Less clear is the extent to which such links were reflected and reinforced by the social lives of rural craftsmen-retailers. Were shoemakers and tailors, for example, connected to urban worlds and cultures, or were they the integral parts of village communities often portrayed in idealistic interpretations of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century rural life?

This paper seeks to address some of these questions through detailed analysis of the probate records of Cheshire tailors and shoe makers between 1700 and 1760.<sup>16</sup> During this period, rural Cheshire was experiencing a range of socio-economic changes: some broadly typical of the North and Midlands; others more particular to the county. Most notable were the continued growth of commercialized livestock farming and the spread of rural manufacturing. From being a mixed agricultural economy in the early seventeenth century, wherein arable and pastoral land use was broadly equal, livestock grew increasingly important. By the end of the century Celia Fiennes noted that 'this shire is remarkable for a great deal of great cheeses and dairies'.<sup>17</sup> This process was most marked in the centre and west of the county. Further east, sheep farming was more important, initially supplying but later being overshadowed by domestic production of woollen and then linen and cotton textiles.<sup>18</sup> These trends towards local specialisation brought increased diversity to Cheshire's rural economy, making it an interesting microcosm of that of the country as a whole. Moreover, they had potentially profound impacts on rural crafts which have hitherto remained under-explored. Probate records have been used on many occasions in studies of retail or craft tradesmen and their shortcomings as

<sup>12</sup> Styles, 'Clothing the North', p. 156.

<sup>13</sup> C. Fowler, 'Robert Mansbridge, a rural tailor and his customers, 1811–1815', *Textile Hist.*, 28 (1997), pp. 35–7.

<sup>14</sup> Wrigley, 'Urban growth and agricultural change', p. 701.

<sup>15</sup> Holderness, 'Rural tradesmen'; Martin 'Village traders'.

<sup>16</sup> This work is part of a larger project, 'Rural services

in the early eighteenth century' funded by the British Academy, grant number SG-32878.

<sup>17</sup> C. Morris (ed.) *The journeys of Celia Fiennes* (1949), p. 177.

<sup>18</sup> A. D. M. Phillips and C. B. Phillips (eds) *A new historical atlas of Cheshire* (2002), p. 56; J. Stobart, *The first industrial region: north-west England, c. 1700–60* (2004), ch. 4.

an historical source are well known.<sup>19</sup> Those that affect the current analysis most directly are the reliability of occupational titles given and the coverage of the population afforded. The first of these problems comprises two elements. One is the absence of an occupational title from the probate record – fortunately comparatively rare in the Cheshire records where less than five per cent of documents do not record an occupation – and the other is the masking of dual occupations under one heading. The importance of multiple incomes in rural households is a commonplace, and its prevalence amongst tailors and shoe makers forms part of the analysis offered here. More problematic is the possibility that individuals styled ‘husbandman’ or ‘weaver’, for example, might also be engaged in tailoring or shoe making. However, systematic analysis of all the probate records for twenty villages in Cheshire shows this to be very rare, certainly in terms of the internal evidence of inventories: only those of tailors and shoe makers listed germane stock or equipment. The social coverage of the probate records is more problematic. Only around 40 per cent of the adult population of Cheshire appear to have left probate records: a proportion which was undoubtedly much lower for the poorer sections of society, including tailors and shoe makers.<sup>20</sup> Whilst this means that we can recreate only a sketch of the true population of craftsmen, the comprehensive geographical coverage of the probate records allows county-wide analysis, rather than the localized studies possible from parish registers. Although the coverage may be thin, there is little reason to believe that the patterns or behaviour revealed should be misleading.

Drawing on these data, three main aims are addressed. The first is to map the distribution of tailors and shoe makers in Cheshire and relate this to a number of explanatory factors highlighted by Martin, Cox and Shammass.<sup>21</sup> In particular, I will focus here on the relationship between rural crafts and population distribution, urban provision, and rural retailing and manufacturing. This allows us to assess the broad relationship between these craftsmen and the urban and rural worlds that formed their socio-spatial context. The second is to build on work by Martin and Holderness by exploring the economic worlds of the tailors and shoemakers. Of particular interest is their involvement in agricultural activities, but the nature and scale of their business activity is also significant. Here, the probate records can be very illuminating, especially in terms of the details they contain of wealth levels, stock and debts. The final aim is to offer a parallel analysis of these craftsmen’s social worlds: an important, but neglected, area. Were these men most strongly linked to urban or rural worlds? Again, the probate records prove helpful, but here the interest lies in the executorial relationships identified in wills. These provide invaluable insights into the close personal relationships that bound craftsmen to their rural communities and their customers.

<sup>19</sup> For a general critique of probate records in historical analyses, see the various contributions to T. Arkell, N. Evans and N. Goose (eds), *When death do us part. Understanding and interpreting the probate records of early-modern England* (2000).

<sup>20</sup> J. Stobart, ‘Geography and industrialization: the

space economy of northwest England, 1701–1760’, *Trans. Institute of British Geographers*, 21 (1996), pp. 682–4.

<sup>21</sup> Martin, ‘Village traders’; Cox, ‘Retailing tradesmen in north Shropshire’; Shammass, *Pre-industrial consumer*, pp. 225–65.

TABLE 1. Number of rural tailors and shoemakers in Cheshire, 1701–60

|            | 1701–20 | 1721–40 | 1741–60 | total |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| tailors    | 23      | 27      | 30      | 80    |
| shoemakers | 16      | 25      | 29      | 70    |
| total      | 39      | 52      | 59      | 150   |

Source: Cheshire and Chester Archives, probate records.

# I

Whilst the golden age of the rural tradesman was probably to be found in the mid-nineteenth century, there is evidence of a growing and prosperous rural service economy in the middle and late eighteenth-century. Shammass argues that country retailers grew in number and Martin suggests a flowering of rural crafts during this period, reflecting general buoyancy in rural societies and economies.<sup>22</sup> Cheshire appears to have shared in this expansion: the number of tailors grew steadily through the first half of the eighteenth century, whilst shoemakers nearly doubled in number (Table 1). As Styles argues for Yorkshire, then, this part of the north of England was far from being commercially backward, even in rural areas.<sup>23</sup> Some of the growth in provision may be attributable to the vagaries of the source, but as coverage of the population tended to deteriorate rather than improve over time, it is likely that expansion was stronger than these figures allow. The position later in the century is less clear, although evidence from early trade directories suggests that numbers had probably stabilized in the 1780s and 1790s. By this time all the larger villages contained at least three or four clothes-making craftsmen: a level of provision comparable to some smaller market towns. For example, the growing villages of Tarporley and Neston contained a shoemaker, a tailor and two breeches makers, and four tailors respectively; in comparison Malpas had two breeches makers and Frodsham a breeches maker and a tailor.<sup>24</sup> The spatial distribution of these craftsmen was fairly even throughout the early decades of the eighteenth century. Provision was best in the villages in the north-east of the county, whilst the central and western townships appear to have been relatively poorly served (Figure 1). But overall, the pattern shows few clusters: in all 104 villages had craftsmen listed and, with the exception of Wilmslow which contained four shoemakers and two tailors, nowhere had more than three tradesmen.

How can we best understand this growth and distribution of rural craftsman-retailing? At a basic level, it was clearly related to demand, and thus to the expansion, distribution and prosperity of population. Between the hearth tax and the first census, the rural population of Cheshire grew from around 75,000 to over 130,000, mostly from the mid-eighteenth century

<sup>22</sup> Shammass, *Pre-industrial consumer*, pp. 226–9; Martin ‘Village traders’, *passim*. See also Holderness, ‘Rural tradesmen’; Wrigley, ‘Urban growth and agricultural change’.

<sup>23</sup> Styles, ‘Clothing the North’, pp. 139–44.

<sup>24</sup> P. Broster, *The Chester directory and guide* (Chester, 1782). The early trade directories in Cheshire seem to be very poor at listing shoe makers, none being enumerated in Macclesfield or Altrincham, while just one is listed in Macclesfield – then a town of c. 6,000.

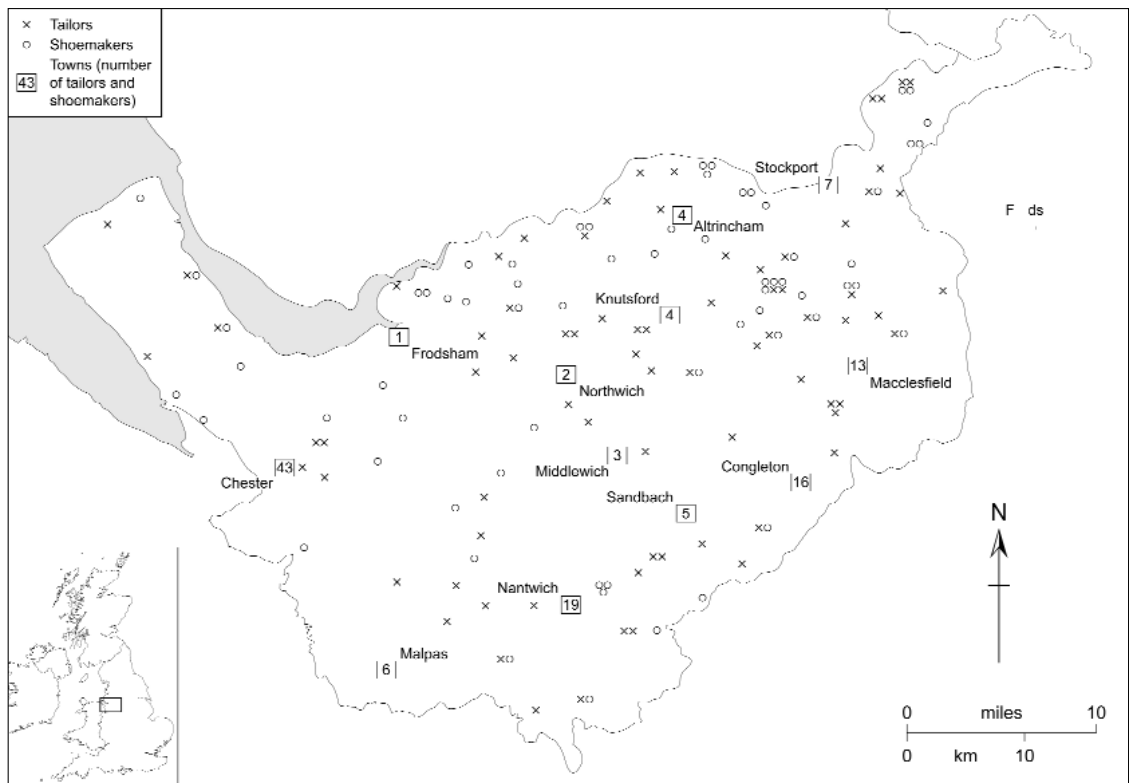


FIGURE 1. Distribution of tailors and shoemakers in Cheshire, 1701–1760.

onwards.<sup>25</sup> Even if the consumption habits of rural-dwellers remained unchanged (and there is considerable evidence that it did not<sup>26</sup>) this clearly represented significant expansion in demand for clothing and, of course, for other goods and services. Yet population growth was uneven, being strongest in the parishes south of Manchester and around Macclesfield, and markedly less in the south and on the Wirral. Whilst this suggests a clear link to rural craft provision, levels of agricultural prosperity ran contrary to these patterns: rents were relatively low in north-east Cheshire and much higher in the west and centre of the county, indicating greater spending power in these areas.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, any additional demand could be supplied by a range of traders in a variety of locations. Principal amongst these were the urban markets and shops. Whilst markets were marginal to the direct provision of tailoring and shoemaking services, they did form important nuclei for retailing activity of all sorts.<sup>28</sup> The probate records for Cheshire list 123 urban tailors and shoemakers. This represents a considerable concentration of retail activity as these towns had a combined population of only around 30,000 in the early

<sup>25</sup> C. Phillips and J. Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540* (1994), p. 134; J. Stobart, 'An eighteenth-century revolution? Investigating urban growth in north-west England, 1664–1801', *Urban Hist.* 23 (1996), p. 40.

<sup>26</sup> See Estabrook, *Urbane and rustic England*;

L. Weatherill, *Consumer behaviour and material culture in Britain, 1600–1760* (1988), esp. pp. 43–69.

<sup>27</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *Atlas of Cheshire*, pp. 42–5 and 62.

<sup>28</sup> Cox, 'Retailing tradesmen in north Shropshire', pp. 6 and 12.

eighteenth century, around one-third of which was in Chester.<sup>29</sup> It might be argued that the villages closest to these towns would be most heavily influenced by urban commercial economies and cultures. Their proximity would encourage greater market-orientation and so they would contain more craftsmen than remoter rural settlements. In contrast, it is possible that these same proximate villages might be served by urban tradesmen and so would have fewer traders of their own. In reality, these urban concentrations appear to have had little impact on the distribution of rural craft activities. Although urban provision was less in the north of the county where rural craftsmen-retailers were most numerous, as Figure 1 shows, there is little indication of a 'shadow' effect even around major centres such as Chester and Nantwich. This supports the arguments of Estabrook and Cox that urban and rural populations were often supplied by complementary systems of provision.<sup>30</sup> Urban shops undoubtedly drew in customers from the surrounding countryside, but much clothing was obtained from village craftsmen, from hawkers or, especially in the case of second-hand clothing, informally from friends or acquaintances.<sup>31</sup>

Given that rural tailors and shoemakers generally served local markets, it is unsurprising that the impact of towns would be muted.<sup>32</sup> More significant would be the other activities present in the villages; the density and growth of population at a local level, and the economic conditions that prevailed in the locality. Concentrations of administrative and retail functions might encourage clustering of craft activities as well. Once again though, the evidence is equivocal. Of the 104 villages with tailors or shoemakers, just thirty-one were the centres of parishes, whilst forty parish centres were apparently without these craftsmen. It is likely that places at the centre of substantial parishes such as Newbold Astbury, Warmingham or Woodchurch also contained craftsmen-retailers not appearing in the probate records, but there was clearly no simple causal relationship. Much the same is true of rural retailing. Retailers or service providers in 101 Cheshire villages left probate records, and just eleven places recorded more than two such tradesmen. Of these, only Wilmslow stands out as a centre of craft activity: other notable retail centres recorded very few craftsmen. Eight retailers in Bunbury left probate records between 1700 and 1760, including three grocers, a mercer and a draper, but just one shoemaker did the same; similarly, in Mottram there were two chapmen, two tobacconists and a mercer, but again only a single shoe maker. To an extent, this again may be a product of the incomplete coverage of the source, but it is clear that we should not assume that retailing and craft activities were clustered into the same locations or were selling to the same people. Retailers probably had rather more extensive customer bases than the more basic craft activities of tailoring and shoemaking. This is clear from the probate inventory of Richard Smith, a mercer from Bunbury, which includes details of book debts from over 400 individuals, many from the village itself, but also from neighbouring settlements such as Tarporley, Spurstow and Tiverton, up to five miles distant by road.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Stobart, 'Urban revolution', p. 40.

<sup>30</sup> See Estabrook, *Urbane and rustic England*; Cox, 'Retailing tradesmen in north Shropshire'; Styles, 'Clothing the North'.

<sup>31</sup> Styles, 'Clothing the North', pp. 151–60; Fowler, 'A rural tailor', pp. 30–33.

<sup>32</sup> By the early nineteenth century, the distances travelled by customers had increased, but the majority were still local and rural: Fowler, 'A rural tailor', p. 30.

<sup>33</sup> Chester and Chester Archives (hereafter CCA), WS 1716, Richard Smith of Bunbury.

Population density could vary considerably from parish to parish, but levels were generally highest in Bucklow, Macclesfield and Northwich Hundreds in the east and north of the county. These were, moreover, the areas with larger parishes and a more dispersed form of settlement. The establishment of craftsmen (and retailers) in each of the several villages and hamlets within the parish would thus produce higher levels of provision than characterized the more nucleated settlement patterns in the generally smaller parishes of western and southern Cheshire. Soils, climate and relief varied considerably across the county, but – as noted earlier – arable was giving way to pastoral farming in most parishes.<sup>34</sup> The inventories of Cheshire husbandmen and yeomen almost invariably record corn (usually barley or wheat) and sometimes peas, potatoes and flax, but the mainstay of most was their cattle, occasionally with a few sheep. Only in the extreme east of the county did sheep become the major element of farmers' stock, as with Thomas Haward, a Tintwistle husbandman whose 210 sheep were worth £67 10s. or 48 per cent of his estate.<sup>35</sup> This lack of major variations in the agricultural economy meant that opportunities for rural craftsmen and retailers were similar across Cheshire. Moreover, parliamentary enclosure had much less impact in Cheshire than was the case in many counties in the English Midlands: most common fields had already been enclosed by the end of the seventeenth century. Activity in the eighteenth century principally involved exchange and consolidation of land holdings and the enclosure of the small but numerous commons and wastes.<sup>36</sup> Under such circumstances, there was not the widespread or sudden loss of land from rural craftsmen seen elsewhere, again making craft activities viable, at least as by-employments, in many places – a point discussed in more detail below.

More significant to the distribution of tailors and shoe makers was the spread of rural industry. The increasingly populous parishes of the north and east of the county were also the areas experiencing rural industrial development, chiefly in terms of textile production. The jobbing weaver remained a feature of many Cheshire villages throughout this period and was recorded in the probate records of 68 settlements. However, the centralized organisation of rural manufacturing was restricted to the areas around Macclesfield, where button-making and silk weaving predominated, and the parishes of Mottram, Stockport, Poynton and Prestbury, where domestic spinning and weaving were increasingly brought under the control of urban merchants, often based in Manchester.<sup>37</sup> The probate records list five weavers in the township of Hyde and six in neighbouring Godley and Hattersley. By the time of Aikin's survey at the close of the eighteenth century, he could confidently write of these villages that 'the cotton trade is the principal source of employment to the young people'.<sup>38</sup> Such industrialisation, and the divisions of labour that it drew upon and encouraged, served to stimulate strong population growth. Thus, we see the population of Macclesfield Hundred increasing more than three-fold between 1664 and 1801, whilst that of Nantwich Hundred increased by less than one-third.<sup>39</sup> It

<sup>34</sup> A. Crosby, *A History of Cheshire* (1996), pp. 62–7.

<sup>35</sup> CCA, WS 1723, Thomas Haward of Tintwistle.

<sup>36</sup> M. Overton, 'Agriculture', in J. Langton and R. J. Morris (eds), *Atlas of industrializing Britain, 1780–1914* (1986), p. 45; Crosby, *Cheshire*, p. 65; Phillips and Phillips, *Atlas of Cheshire*, pp. 52–5.

<sup>37</sup> Stobart, *First industrial region*, ch. 4; A. Wadsworth and J. de L. Mann, *The cotton trade and industrial Lancashire, 1600–1780* (1931), p. 79.

<sup>38</sup> J. Aikin, *A description of the country from thirty to forty miles round Manchester* (London, 1793), p. 458.

<sup>39</sup> Phillips and Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire*, p. 135.

also engendered an increasing market-orientation amongst the population, which helped to support a larger craft (and retail) sector in many villages. This helps to account for the distribution of craftsmen in rural Cheshire. It also gives us some pointers about the ways in which rural crafts and trading might have interacted with the local population. We can picture the village tailor or shoemaker linked to a network of customers drawn from the immediate neighbourhood and comprised of husbandmen and fellow-craftsmen. In this imagining, they form bastions of the rural community. Equally, though, we might see them as increasingly dependent upon a rural industrial workforce and a commercialized urban-centred world – tied to towns through chains of supply, capital and sociability. Which of these two images is more accurate?

## II

The probate inventories of rural tailors and shoemakers reveal a great deal about the economic world in which these craftsmen lived. Most direct is the evidence of stock-in-trade. Only eleven of the inventories included items of stock or equipment, but these can still tell us much about the nature and scale of activity undertaken by these village craftsmen. In most cases, the value of these goods was relatively small and accounted for only 3–10 per cent of the total estate. This reflects the low cost of the tools required and suggests that entry costs to these trades were correspondingly low. Fairly typical were Humphrey Walmsley of Pownell Fee, who had tailor's shears, smoothing irons and a hacking table valued at just 4s., James Hardy of Wilmslow, with his shoemaker's kit valued at just 2s., and Robert Earle of Keckwick, whose shoemaker's seats were also worth 2s.<sup>40</sup> Although modest in value, these tools clearly allowed such men to meet local demand for shoes and clothing. The late mechanisation of both trades reflects not just technical challenges, but also the efficiency and suitability of existing hand manufacturing techniques.

Stocks of cloth and leather were more valuable, but again generally modest: Walmsley had camlet, druggit and rugg worth a total of £2 9s.; Thomas Heath of Wybunbury, possessed 'two pieces of cloth for two coats' worth £1 14s., whilst the leather and working tools in Samuel Wroe's workshop in Great Warford were valued at £3.<sup>41</sup> These men must have run their businesses at a fairly modest scale. Like the Basingstoke tailor Robert Mansbridge two generations later, they were making or mending clothing for their neighbours, largely on a bespoke basis. It would be mistaken, though, to view all village craftsmen in this light: some shoemakers certainly operated at a larger scale. Robert Mercer of Eastham, for example, owned working tools, 47 lasts and three seats worth 13s. 6d. and had 12s. of 'leather not wrought up'. Samuel Roylance of Sale had 'seats and working tools in his shop' valued at £1 1s.<sup>42</sup> Still more impressive is the list of tools, equipment and materials itemized in the inventory of Peter Hackney of Etchells. He possessed cutting boards, lasts, seats and shelves worth 14s. 6d.; a wax tub and a

<sup>40</sup> CCA, WS 1730, Humphrey Walmsley of Pownall Fee; WS 1753, James Hardy of Wilmslow; WS 1723, Robert Earle of Keckwick.

<sup>41</sup> CCA, WS 1730, Humphrey Walmsley of Pownell

Fee; WS 1707, Thomas Heath of Wybunbury; WS 1713, Samuel Wroe of Great Warford.

<sup>42</sup> CCA, WS 1724, Robert Mercer of Eastham; WS 1748, Samuel Roylance of Sale.

wax pan valued at 4s.; resin and beeswax worth £1 8s.; yarn and hemp to the value of 19s. 6d., and £14 10s. of curried and uncurried leather.<sup>43</sup>

Hackney clearly operated on a much larger scale than men like James Hardy and Robert Earle, and there is also evidence that he ran his shoemaking business in a rather different manner. Unlike their urban counterparts and later rural craftsmen-retailers, few of these men had stocks of finished items of clothing: most seem to have made goods to order.<sup>44</sup> None of the tailors held finished garments and only three shoemaker's inventories list made-up shoes. When they do appear, however, these items were worth considerably more than tools and equipment. Thus, Robert Mercer's varied stock of shoes was valued at £1 18s. 8d. – more than three times as much as his tools – whilst those of Peter Hackney and John Arrundell were worth £5 19s. and £6 10s. respectively.<sup>45</sup> These shoemakers were clearly supplying ready-made shoes, either to a local clientele or to wider markets, as well as providing the more traditional jobbing service. This was not mass production: the equipment listed in Hackney's inventory comprised hand tools and he appears to have worked alone. Mechanisation and factory production came only 150 years later with the introduction of sewing and riveting machines.<sup>46</sup> However, these large stocks of shoes reveal that hand manufacturing could meet growing and increasingly varied demand, and indicate that commercial or retail innovation was not restricted to towns. The flexibility of production is underlined by the range of different types available from these shoemakers. Robert Mercer had shoes for men, women and boys as well as clogs and boots, whilst Hackney's inventory also distinguished brogues and hampers. Moreover, both men clearly had a considerable number of customers. Hackney had book debts totalling £27 os. 2d. which, given that the shoes itemized in his inventory had an average value of about 2s. 6d., suggests credit sales of over 200 pairs of shoes or boots.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, even these levels of stock were modest when compared with those of early eighteenth-century urban tradesmen. At the extreme were men like Robert Wilkinson, a Nantwich tailor, who had 127 items of finished clothing worth a total of £27 3s., or Charles Mason of Chester with nearly 250 pairs of men's, women's and children's shoes in his shop, along with 172 lasts, several hides, and 10,000 pegs.<sup>47</sup> This greater level of investment in stock-in-trade no doubt reflected a different scale of operation and the larger customer base being supplied in and from such towns. In addition to his extensive stock, Mason had £61 6s. of book debts owed by 117 individuals from Chester and its immediate hinterland. It is also likely that rural craftsmen produced to order more than their urban counterparts and so rarely generated substantial stocks of clothing and shoes. Whilst the evidence in craftsmen's inventories is equivocal, it is clear that village shops in Cheshire did not sell ready-made clothes in the way seen in a growing number of towns. Some carried stocks of caps, gloves and stockings, but none had the shoes, coats, breeches or gowns found in shops in the larger towns.<sup>48</sup>

Notwithstanding such arguments, the most important factor in the relatively low

<sup>43</sup> CCA, WS 1707, Peter Hackney of Etchells.

<sup>44</sup> Styles, 'Clothing the North', p. 143; Holderness, 'Rural tradesmen', pp. 77–81; Fowler, 'A rural tailor', pp. 33–5.

<sup>45</sup> CCA, WS 1724, Robert Mercer of Eastham; WS 1707, Peter Hackney of Etchells; WS 1742, John Arrundell

of Hattersley.

<sup>46</sup> B. Trinder, 'Shoes', in *id.*, (ed.) *The Blackwell encyclopedia of industrial archaeology* (1992), p. 685.

<sup>47</sup> CCA, WS 1721, Robert Wilkinson of Nantwich; WS 1737, Charles Mason of Chester.

<sup>48</sup> See also Styles, 'Clothing the North', pp. 156–8.

capitalisation of rural crafts was probably the part-time nature of these activities. Holderness suggests that nearly all rural tradesmen in Lincolnshire engaged in some form of agriculture and Martin argues that the loss of ownership or access to land following enclosure severely undermined the economic viability of many Warwickshire craftsmen.<sup>49</sup> As we have already noted, parliamentary enclosure was a more radical process in the Midlands than in Cheshire, and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century enclosure by private agreement does not appear to have excluded Cheshire craftsmen from small-scale farming. Over four-fifths of a sample of fifty wills included specific references to tenements and messuages, and seventeen out of twenty-seven inventories include details of livestock. The amount of land held and bequeathed by these craftsmen was rarely specified, but values were given to livestock, crops and husbandry ware. On average, these items accounted for about two-fifths of the personal inventoried wealth of tailors and shoemakers (excluding debts), but the level of stock was extremely varied. It ranged from the two sheep and eight geese owned by the tailor John Shenton of Ridley to Robert Earle's four horses, ten cows, four calves, two carts, ploughs, hay and corn, which together were worth £49 10s. – about three-quarters of his personal property.<sup>50</sup>

To an extent, this has resonance with Martin's argument that land-holding was crucial to the economic life-worlds and the survival of village craftsmen in eighteenth-century Warwickshire.<sup>51</sup> However, the relative importance of agriculture and craft activities to individual households is difficult to judge, not least because the *stocks* of money held in animals, corn and hay, carts and ploughs inevitably loom much larger in the inventories than do the *flows* of income created through trade. As Table 2 indicates, livestock and husbandry ware were important features of poor tailors and shoemakers as well as those who were relatively wealthy. Indeed, such items formed a higher proportion of the inventoried goods on estates worth less than £20 than was the case for their wealthier neighbours. For some of these shoemakers and tailors, agricultural incomes must have been greater than those earned through their trade. Yet it would be wrong to see agriculture as an economic crutch for craftsmen otherwise unable to make a living. Combining an agricultural income with that from craft could be an active choice as much as a necessity: a small-holding may have acted as a buffer against downturns in the (local) economy, but it also formed a significant secondary source of income. It is difficult to imagine that Samuel Roylance's household could have survived without the corn and potatoes, the two cows and a calf, and the little grey horse that comprised over three-quarters of his inventoried wealth. In contrast, John Arrundell's two kins and his corn and hay, worth a total of £7 7s., were probably less important as income streams than his shoe-making activities which had generated £29 4s. of book debts and finished shoes.<sup>52</sup> What is interesting is that both these men chose to call themselves shoemaker rather than husbandman. It seems likely that a number of others were engaged in a similar range of activities, but styled themselves husbandman, although the internal evidence of probate inventories does not suggest that this was common in Cheshire. Nonetheless, it is clear that rural crafts were more widespread than the records indicate and that many rural households drew upon multiple incomes.

<sup>49</sup> Holderness, 'Rural tradesmen', p. 77; Martin, 'Village traders', pp. 185–8.

<sup>50</sup> CCA, WS 1725, John Shenton of Ridley; WS 1723, Robert Earle of Keckwick. See Holderness, 'Rural

tradesmen', p. 79.

<sup>51</sup> Martin, 'Village traders', p. 184.

<sup>52</sup> CCA, WS 1748, Samuel Roylance of Sale; WS 1742, John Arrundell of Hattersley.

TABLE 2. Agricultural stock held by selected rural tailors and shoemakers, 1701–60  
(value and percentage of total inventory value)

|                    |   | number in<br>view | Cattle | Horses | Carts,<br>ploughs | Corn &<br>hay | Pigs,<br>sheep,<br>poultry | Total<br>agricultural<br>goods | Total<br>inventory |
|--------------------|---|-------------------|--------|--------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Inventories > £75  | £ | 6                 | 63.65  | 16.37  | 4.45              | 11.91         | 0.6                        | 96.98                          | 1057.68            |
|                    | % |                   | 6.0    | 1.6    | 0.4               | 1.1           | 0.1                        | 9.2                            |                    |
| Inventories £40–74 | £ | 9                 | 51.52  | 10.5   | 7.72              | 11.75         | 0                          | 81.45                          | 476.98             |
|                    | % |                   | 10.8   | 2.2    | 1.6               | 2.5           | 0.0                        | 17.1                           |                    |
| Inventories £20–39 | £ | 7                 | 27.75  | 12.0   | 0                 | 14.0          | 4.55                       | 58.3                           | 209.72             |
|                    | % |                   | 13.3   | 5.7    | 0.0               | 6.7           | 2.1                        | 27.8                           |                    |
| Inventories < £20  | £ | 5                 | 10.5   | 2.62   | 0.75              | 4.05          | 1.75                       | 19.67                          | 57.08              |
|                    | % |                   | 18.4   | 4.6    | 1.3               | 7.1           | 3.1                        | 34.5                           |                    |
| Total              | £ | 27                | 153.42 | 41.0   | 12.92             | 41.72         | 6.9                        | 256.41                         | 1612.22            |
|                    | % |                   | 9.5    | 2.6    | 0.8               | 2.6           | 0.4                        | 15.9                           |                    |

Source: Cheshire and Chester Archives, probate records.

There are echoes here of the dual occupations so often associated with proto-industrial production and, in the activities of men such as John Arrundell, the suggestion that some were largely independent of the land. Yet there is little evidence that these men were drawn into larger scale, urban based, putting-out systems. This type of manufacturing of footwear was becoming widespread in the early nineteenth century, especially in Northamptonshire and Staffordshire. The 1835 edition of *Pigot's Directory* noted that many of the inhabitants of Abbots Bromley (Staffs.) had formerly been employed in 'the making of shoes for the manufacturers in Stafford'.<sup>53</sup> However, most tailors and shoemakers in eighteenth-century Cheshire appear to have operated independently and within local markets. This generally modest scale of activity is evident from the debts owed to these tailors and shoemakers. Debt was endemic amongst early-modern tradesmen and served to lock them into local and regional webs of trust and mutual obligation.<sup>54</sup> Half the inventories detailed debts of one sort or another, and several wills include bequests based on the repayment of debts owing to the testator. Exposure to debt and the nature of the debts themselves was very varied. John Adderton had £4 os. od. in 'money owing to ye deceased', whereas Randle Chatterton was owed £320 in three bonds taken out with neighbours.<sup>55</sup> In all, eight inventories identify what seem to be debts for work carried out or goods supplied, but few are specific about who owed these book debts or where they lived. Given that most customers were local, they did not need identifying beyond their name: they were well known to the deceased craftsman and presumably to his executors. However, there

<sup>53</sup> Pigot and co., *National Commercial Directory* (1835), p. 390.

<sup>54</sup> See B. A. Holderness, 'Credit in a rural community, 1660–1800', *Midland Hist.*, 3 (1975), pp. 94–116;

C. Muldrew, *The economy of obligation. The culture of credit and social relations in early modern England* (1998).

<sup>55</sup> CCA, WS 1748, John Adderton of Buglawton; WS 1730, Randle Chatterton of Davenham.

are one or two hints of more distant links. William Eaton's inventory includes 'a desperate debt in London' worth £3, as well as four others with named individuals, probably from elsewhere in Cheshire. Whilst the nature of these debts is unclear, more detail is given for the shoemaker John Arundell of Hattersley. He was owed £11 14s. in book debts and £6 in desperate debts. He also had shoes to the value of £4 15s. in his own house and at Chapel-en-le-Frith some twelve miles away, and a further £1 15s. at the house of John Lee in neighbouring Mottram and in Liverpool.<sup>56</sup> This amounts to a substantial amount of stock and an extensive trading network, linking rural production in east Cheshire to demand in Derbyshire and west Lancashire.

### III

This is a rare insight into the economic geography of such craftsmen. However, if details of their economic lives are somewhat hazy, social links are much clearer and tell a consistent story: that tailors and shoemakers were firmly locked into their local, rural communities. This is apparent from analysis of executorial relationships outlined in wills and administration bonds. Probate records are economic, social and cultural as well as legal documents and so reflect many aspects of an individual's life-world. Being an executor or administrator publicly identified a person as trustworthy and gave them status; it also brought them into intimate contact with the finances and social workings of the deceased's household and family.<sup>57</sup> This made the choice of executor, or the willingness to act as administrator, very important to the successful management of the estate and to the social standing both of the deceased and their executor/administrator. Probate records therefore identify some of the closest and most personal of relationships, and so represent only part of the testator's social network. That said, they provide 'sensitive indicators of family awareness' and a reliable register of significant life relations, incorporating both friends and family.<sup>58</sup>

The majority of executorial links recorded in the wills of Cheshire tailors and shoemakers were with family members (Table 3). This contrasts with the relationships identified by urban testators in north-west England, where non-kin formed almost one-half of all links.<sup>59</sup> It seems that urban and rural communities encouraged somewhat different types of social relationship. Towns offered a greater range of potential contacts: neighbours were more numerous, as were fellow tradesmen, workers and church-goers; and there were new opportunities to forge friendships through guilds, clubs, societies and associations. Urban living may also have served to dislocate kinship networks, although here the evidence is more equivocal.<sup>60</sup> Despite the

<sup>56</sup> CCA, WS 1705, William Eaton of Over Tabley; WS 1742, John Arundell of Hattersley.

<sup>57</sup> S. D'Cruze, 'The middling sort in eighteenth-century Colchester: independence, social relations and the community broker', in J. Barry and C. Brooks (eds) *The middling sort of people. Culture, society and politics in England, 1550-1800* (1994), pp. 181-2.

<sup>58</sup> D. Cressy, 'Kinship and kin interaction in early modern England', *Past and Present*, 113 (1986), p. 53.

<sup>59</sup> J. Stobart, 'Social and geographical contexts of

property transmission in the eighteenth century', in J. Stobart and A. Owens (eds), *Urban Fortunes: property and inheritance in the town, 1700-1900* (2000), pp. 108-130.

<sup>60</sup> For a summary of the social possibilities of urban living, see P. Sharpe, 'Population and society, 1700-1840', in P. Clark (ed.) *The Cambridge urban history of Britain*, II, 1540-1840 (2000), pp. 513-27; J. Ellis, *The Georgian Town, 1680-1840* (2001), pp. 65-86.

TABLE 3. Executorial links of selected rural tailors and shoemakers, 1701–60

|                                                    | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Nuclear family (wife/children)                     | 56            | 32.9              |
| Family of origin (father/brother/sister)           | 16            | 9.4               |
| Kin (brother-in-law/son-in-law/cousin/<br>kinsman) | 26            | 15.3              |
| Non-kin                                            | 72            | 42.4              |
| Total                                              | 170           | 100.0             |

*Note:* n=83.

*Source:* Cheshire and Chester Archives, probate records.

growing impact of inter-rural migration, kinship relationships remained much stronger as a foundation for social interaction and support systems within villages, especially in these most intensely felt and most trusting of relationships where personal as well as financial matters were laid bare.<sup>61</sup> Wrightson suggests that these family ties comprised a dense and local network of linkages, binding individuals to one another and to the spatial community within which they lived.<sup>62</sup> In preferentially naming close family members as executors, these rural tailors and shoemakers were thus reflecting the likely structure of their life worlds. There were, though, a significant number of non-kin relationships identified in the probate records. Given the over-arching importance of family to rural communal life, these non-kin contacts are particularly revealing of the broader social world of village folk: did they tie these craftsmen to rural or urban communities; to a world of trade and commerce or one of agriculture?

Many extended families appear to have been contained within local areas, but family ties could be sustained over considerable distance and without the need for regular contact.<sup>63</sup> Links to brothers and sons, nephews and brothers-in-law could extend over considerable distances as individuals moved to villages and towns elsewhere in the region or country for employment or for marriage. Thus we see John Watmough, a tailor from Bebington on the Wirral, naming as an executor his brother-in-law in Formby, Lancashire; and John Hyde, a tailor from Marple, nominating his son who lived in London.<sup>64</sup> Distance, though, seems to have been crucial in defining non-kin relationships (Table 4), suggesting a dense local network of social links. Nearly two-thirds of the non-kin executors named in the probate records lived either in the same village as the testator or in a neighbouring village (less than 3 miles distant), and less than

<sup>61</sup> See S. King, 'Migrants on the margin? Mobility, integration and occupations in the West Riding, 1650–1820', *J. Historical Geography* 23 (1997), pp. 284–303; K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty and piety in an English village: Terling, 1525–1700* (1978, sec. edn, 1995); J. Johnston, 'Family, kin and community in eight Lincolnshire parishes, 1567–1800', *Rural Hist.*, 6 (1995), pp. 179–92.

<sup>62</sup> K. Wrightson, *Earthly necessities. Economic lives in*

*early modern Britain* (2000), pp. 69–86.

<sup>63</sup> See Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 73–109 for the importance of the localisation of family networks in spatially defining social systems. Cressy, 'Kinship and kin interaction', discusses the maintenance of family ties over time and space.

<sup>64</sup> CCA, WS 1712, John Watmough of Bebington; WS 1734, John Hyde of Marple.

TABLE 4. Geography of non-kin executorial links of selected rural tailors and shoemakers, 1701–60

|                           | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage<br/>(of known)</i> |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Same village              | 22            | 33.3                             |
| Less than 3 miles distant | 20            | 30.3                             |
| 3–6 miles distant         | 15            | 22.7                             |
| 6–10 miles distant        | 4             | 6.1                              |
| Over 10 miles distant     | 5             | 7.6                              |
| Unknown                   | 6             |                                  |
| Total                     | 72            |                                  |

*Note:* n=83.

*Source:* Cheshire and Chester Archives, probate records.

one in twelve lived more than 10 miles distant. Not only were these links local; they were predominantly rural. Only one-fifth of links was with townspeople, almost invariably individuals in the nearest market town.

The principal dimensions of rural tailors' and shoemakers' social orbit were clearly local and rural; a geography that is underlined by the networks of personal credit and debt in which they were involved. The people to whom these craftsmen loaned money, in so far as they can be reliably traced, lived in nearby villages. For example, of the three debtors who took out bonds with Randle Chatterton, one cannot be traced, but the other two were a yeoman from Leftwich and a shoemaker from Weaverham, both under three miles from his home village of Davenham. Their creditors were also generally local men, engaged in related occupations. In signing the administration bond for Francis Hulme of Wilmslow, Joseph Potts – a yeoman from neighbouring Prestbury – was identified as the principal creditor of the deceased. Potts may have been supplying Hulme with cash, livestock or leather. A similar relationship may be represented in the case of Joseph Austin of Audlem, whose principal creditor was one Samuel Harding, a gentleman from the same village.<sup>65</sup> Whatever the precise reasons for a debt or credit, its existence adds another layer to the dense local networks of linkages that enmeshed village craftsmen.

These cases are unusual in the clarity they give to the relationship between deceased and their (non-kin) executor/administrator. Occasionally, we are given glimpses of the intensity of the bond between them – for example, when James Liverpool of Alpraham appointed his 'trusty and honest neighbours' John Vickers and John Hough<sup>66</sup> – but the underlying reasons for friendships often remain hidden. Proximity provides a powerful explanation for friendship: it allowed regular interaction and sociability. Such social contact was often centred on local institutions. Clark argues that alehouses hosted a growing range of leisure activities, including games, clubs and societies. Equally, as Caunce demonstrates, many communal rituals were

<sup>65</sup> CCA, WS 1730, Randle Chatterton of Davenham; Austin.  
WS 1745, Francis Hulme of Wilmslow; WS 1759, Joseph

<sup>66</sup> CCA, WS 1746, James Liverpool of Alpraham.

centred on the church or chapel.<sup>67</sup> These activities served to draw together communities and offered the basis of the strong bonds of friendship represented in the probate records. Shops also offered the possibility for frequent social interaction between shopkeeper and customer, and between fellow customers. No detailed accounts of the lives of Cheshire tailors and shoemakers survive, but evidence from an early nineteenth-century Hampshire tailor suggests that customers made regular, but infrequent trips to his shop.<sup>68</sup> It seems unlikely that most village craftsmen kept shop every day. Time might be better spent working in the field, making up shoes or visiting local gentry to repair clothes and/or linen. Specialist retailers probably formed more of a focus for sociability, therefore, not least because the goods they sold were bought more frequently than clothing. In the case of the butcher Ralph Williams of Wybunbury, his account book shows that several customers visited his shop almost every day that it was open, strengthening the economic ties of buying and selling with the sociability of frequent interaction. In mercer's shops, this socialising could go much further: in rural Sussex, Thomas Turner often spent many hours drinking tea and playing cards with his favoured customers.<sup>69</sup> Similar acts of sociability may have centred on tailors and shoemakers, but we have no evidence. It seems likely, thought, that the time spent in the workshop, being measured for and fitted with coats, suits or shoes, would have helped to cement close social bonds between craftsman and his predominantly local clientele. That some of the friendships thus forged or strengthened were reflected in executorial links seem certain.

Another possibility is that the testator and executor shared the same economic worlds. This can be most readily, if somewhat superficially, assessed by comparing their occupations (Table 5). The most trusted friends and neighbours of craftsmen-retailers (as measured by appointment as executors) were predominantly other craftsmen or were occupied in agriculture. In part this can be explained on the grounds that these were the most numerous occupational groups in villages, but it undoubtedly also links in with the economic lives of the tailors and shoemakers. We have already seen that village craftsmen were often involved in farming. This must have predisposed them to know and trust others involved in these activities. Shared economic concerns brought individuals closer in social and emotional terms, and an individual's business dealings often mapped closely onto their personal friendships.<sup>70</sup> We can see this with John Arundell who named John Lee (at whose house he had a sizeable number of finished shoes) as one of his executors. Conversely, the comparative lack of close social contact with individuals engaged in trading activities suggests a social distancing of these rural craftsmen from (urban) commercial life. Of the twenty townsfolk named as executors or appointed as administrators, thirteen were craftsmen and just four were engaged in retailing. This is not to suggest that rural tailors and shoemakers were isolated from the influence of urban markets and supplies: almost half of the urban executors named were in related leather

<sup>67</sup> P. Clark, *The English alehouse. A social history, 1200–1830* (1983), pp. 233–5; S. Caunce, 'Complexity, community structure and competitive advantage with the Yorkshire woollen industry, c. 1700–1850', *Business Hist.*, 39 (1997), pp. 27–43.

<sup>68</sup> Fowler, 'A rural tailor', pp. 30–3.

<sup>69</sup> CCA, DDX 352/1; Cox, *Complete tradesman*, pp. 134–5.

<sup>70</sup> Muldrew, *Economy of obligation*, pp. 186–9; D'Cruze, 'Middling sort in eighteenth-century Colchester', pp. 187–90.

TABLE 5. Occupations of the executors of selected rural tailors and shoemakers, 1701–60

|             | <i>Executors: non-kin</i> |                                  | <i>Executors = kin</i> |                                  |
|-------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
|             | <i>Number</i>             | <i>Percentage<br/>(of known)</i> | <i>Number</i>          | <i>Percentage<br/>(of known)</i> |
| Agriculture | 24                        | 42.1                             | 13                     | 48.1                             |
| Crafts      | 20                        | 35.1                             | 13                     | 48.1                             |
| Retail      | 7                         | 12.3                             | 0                      | 0.0                              |
| Other       | 6                         | 10.5                             | 1                      | 3.7                              |
| Unknown     | 15                        |                                  | 71                     |                                  |
| Total       | 72                        |                                  | 98                     |                                  |

Note: n=83.

Source: Cheshire and Chester Archives, probate records.

or clothing trades.<sup>71</sup> However, links which seem apparent in aggregate become more problematic in individual cases. For example, John Reed, a tailor in the town of Northwich, acted as administrator for his fellow tailor James Forshall; yet the lead signatory was Forshall's brother John – a gardener from a neighbouring village. Similarly, Robert Millington of Chester, currier, signed the administration bond of the cordwainer Thomas Lawrenson, but again the bond was taken out by a fellow shoemaker in Wimbolds Trafford, one William Hanley, who had married Lawrenson's widow.<sup>72</sup> Occasionally, real trading links between town and country are revealed, as in the case of Thomas Patten, a Chester currier, who took out letters of administration for the estate of Peers Massey, a cordwainer in the village of Little Budworth, some twelve miles away. The administration bond identified Patten as the principal creditor, suggesting that he had been supplying leather to Massey and perhaps other shoe makers in the area. Significantly, Patten's co-signatories were a tanner and cordwainer – both fellow residents of Chester – suggesting a link between Massey and a nexus of urban leather tradesmen.<sup>73</sup> As noted above, however, most signatories identified as creditors were themselves rural dwellers and were engaged in agriculture or craft trades. The overall impression, therefore, is of village tailors and shoemakers living their social as well as their economic lives within craft and agricultural worlds.

This picture of family-centred local socio-economic systems is further strengthened by the gifting exhibited by testators. Predictably, there were very few bequests outside the family: people's duty was to their own.<sup>74</sup> Of those who felt that they could leave money beyond their immediate family circle, the beneficiaries were invariably local and often agriculture or craft related. Detailed analysis is possible for only four individuals (only rarely were locations given for beneficiaries and tracing individuals by name alone is fraught with difficulties), but the story

<sup>71</sup> See Wrightson, *Earthly necessities*, pp. 93–8 and 235–40.

<sup>72</sup> CCA, WS 1738, James Forshall of Comberbach; WS 1713, Thomas Lawrenson of Wimbolds Trafford.

<sup>73</sup> CCA, WS 1756, Peers Massey of Little Budworth.

<sup>74</sup> See Johnston, 'Family, kin and community', pp. 189–90; Stobart, 'Social and geographical contexts', pp. 123–8.

they tell is clear and consistent. Of the thirty-nine people positively identified, nearly 60 per cent lived in the same village or within three miles of the testator. Randle Thompson, a tailor from Odd Rode in south-east Cheshire, was fairly typical: in the absence of any immediate family, he left small amounts of money, clothes or furniture to eighteen named individuals, plus an uncertain number of minors.<sup>75</sup> Most were nephews or nieces, but they included two friends from Odd Rode and others in neighbouring Lawton and nearby Sandbach, as well as the village school to which Thompson gave 40 shillings. Other village craftsmen left money to the parish or to dissenting chapels.<sup>76</sup> The fullest analysis is possible for the shoemaker Samuel Wroe, who took the unusual step of giving the place of residence for the majority of his twenty-five beneficiaries.<sup>77</sup> On the basis of friendships marked by bequests, his social world was essentially local and rural. Whilst only three beneficiaries (including his wife, Alice) lived in Wroe's own village of Great Warford, just two were more than six miles distant. Most of his friends lived in Dean Row or Handforth, and many may have been linked to the local dissenting chapel to whose minister he gave 10 shillings for preaching his funeral sermon. If this link is true, then this confirms Caunce's argument for the importance of chapel life in the construction of local networks, especially in rural areas.<sup>78</sup> Yet it is impossible to be certain and, on the basis of the handful of Wroe's friends for whom occupations can be identified, it seems that his circle was centred on other shoemakers and farmers. Most interesting in this regard is William Millington, a shoemaker from neighbouring Woodford, who received broken shoe leather to the value of 10s. along with Wroe's working seat, lasts and wax pan. This reconfirms the close relationship between social and business networks, and between the economic and social worlds of these craftsmen.

#### IV

Tailors and shoemakers grew in number across Cheshire in the first half of the eighteenth century. Their distribution through the county seems to have been relatively unaffected by urban or rural clusters of service or retail provision, and there is little to distinguish lowland from upland parishes in terms of the number or growth of craftsmen. Any concentrations appear to have been related to the nature of settlement and, more especially, the local economy. Areas of dispersed and industrialising population seemed to offer better opportunities for craftsmen to earn a living. This relates to the ways in which these men conducted their businesses. Most appear to have operated at a small scale, selling their wares and offering their services to neighbours: few seem to have been drawn into wider commercial networks. There were exceptions, of course, but tailors especially seem to have undertaken much of their work within geographically confined economic worlds. Furthermore, these craftsmen were deeply involved in agriculture, combining two income streams in a way that effectively subsidized their crafts production and allowed them to locate in places with limited markets for the clothing they produced and sold. This agricultural orientation was strengthened through their social

<sup>75</sup> CCA, WS 1701, Randle Thompson of Odd Rode.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, CCA, WS 1744, John Lamb of Great Boughton.

<sup>77</sup> CCA, WS 1713, Samuel Wroe of Great Warford.

<sup>78</sup> See Caunce, 'Community structure'.

relationships which tied them to their rural farming communities. They were thus both dependent on and a vital social and economic element of the rural world they inhabited.

All this has a number of important implications for our understanding of the broader processes of change affecting rural society and the provision of goods and services in the eighteenth century. The first concerns the relationship between village craftsmen and the growing market orientation of rural households. The link between the two is perhaps most apparent from the concentration of tailors and shoemakers in the industrialising parishes of north-east Cheshire, but the county-wide growth in the number of craftsmen far exceeded that of the rural population as a whole. The most obvious conclusion, that Cheshire villagers were increasingly inclined to purchase clothes from specialist producers, matches de Vries' arguments for an industrious as well as industrial revolution. Importantly, this demand was being met – at least during the early part of the eighteenth century – by rural as well as urban provision. Judging from the limited evidence of their debt patterns and the more comprehensive information on the networks of friends, tailors and shoemakers drew most of their customers from their neighbours in their own and the surrounding villages. The irony is that increased household specialisation and market-oriented consumption was facilitated by craftsmen who themselves remained non-specialized, drawing on dual income streams: craft-retailing and agriculture. This forms the second important point to emerge from this study. It can be interpreted, in line with Martin, as providing the individual with concerned with some security from the vagaries of the market for agricultural produce or their craft wares. Seen in this light, rural craftsmen-farmers might be seen as relic features from earlier times, soon to be replaced by more specialized individuals operating at a larger scale. A more positive interpretation – and one that fits with the experience of men such as John Arundell – is that non-specialisation was perfectly compatible with economic dynamism. For the family and household, it was a mechanism for maximising income; for the market more generally, it allowed flexibility in the supply of clothing. As with proto-industrial systems, such production could be highly responsive to changing demand and/or markets. If this was indeed the case, then it is unsurprising that the period under review saw no marked shift away from agriculture amongst rural shoemakers and tailors. Even those operating on a large scale and apparently linked with wider distribution networks owned land and kept livestock. Moreover, their social links were, and remained, essentially rural, locking these craftsmen into the local agricultural/craft economy.

The third point centres on the way in which rural craftsmen-retailers fitted into the wider transformation of retailing and consumption in the eighteenth century. Here, the broader picture shows the urbanisation of both supply and demand: improved transport allowed the spatial expansion of urban market areas, whilst an economic and cultural renaissance of towns meant that rural consumption was increasingly informed by urban tastes and priorities.<sup>79</sup> As their post-mortem debts make clear, craftsmen in Cheshire towns had many customers in the surrounding countryside, although – as noted above – this does not appear to have led to any widespread reduction in the number of rural craftsmen. It is clear, however, that any

<sup>79</sup> See P. Borsay (ed.), *The eighteenth-century town, 1688–1820. A reader in English urban history* (1990); J. Chartres, 'The marketing of agricultural produce', in J. Thirsk (ed) *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, V (ii), 1640–1750 (1985), pp. 406–502.

eighteenth-century urban and commercial penetration of rural communities and cultures came, not through these village craftsmen-retailers, but through direct linking of urban traders and rural demand. The social and economic links of village tailors and shoemakers were firmly rural: their family, friends, creditors and debtors were predominantly found in their own or neighbouring villages. These links also mark the different social worlds of rural and urban craftsmen-retailers: the final point to arise from this study. Artisans in towns are increasingly being portrayed as part of the lower reaches of the burgeoning middle ranks. They shared the tastes and values of shopkeepers and service providers, and, like them, they emulated the behaviour of their social superiors. Those in villages remained firmly locked into rural life and rural society: they befriended other craftsmen or farmers and were thus part of a seemingly more conservative agricultural world.<sup>80</sup> Rather than harbingers of modernity, bringing urban values into the countryside, they are better seen as bastions of the rural community: much the position they are seen as holding when their late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century decline brings them more firmly into the spotlight.

<sup>80</sup> See Estabrook, *Urbane and rustic England*.

# The Glasgow case: meat, disease and regulation, 1889–1924<sup>\*</sup>

by P. J. Atkins

## Abstract

Contemporary estimates indicate that a substantial proportion of the indigenous beef consumed in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came from tuberculous animals. If properly cooked, this meat presented less of a risk to human health than infected raw milk, but concerns were nevertheless expressed by many public health professionals, especially in the 1880s and 1890s. This paper looks at the interests of the various parties in the debate about diseased meat that evolved between 1889 and 1924. It investigates the solutions proposed and comments on the nature of central government policy-making. Much depended on a notorious case in 1889 in Glasgow. The local authority there successfully prosecuted a butcher and a meat wholesaler for displaying diseased meat illegally, and thereby created a precedent, placing the responsibility for quality at the feet of particular actors in the food system. This unleashed a heated debate between the local state and the meat trade and friction between farmers and butchers. Finding a negotiated compromise between the various parties proved to be difficult and finally, in 1924, the government felt the need to impose its own solution in the form of the Public Health (Meat) Regulations.

‘Quality’, ‘trust’ and ‘local’ are concepts that have loomed large in recent work on agriculture and food systems. In their positive senses, they are seen as providing means of adding value in farming regions dominated by economically and environmentally challenged productivist agriculture.<sup>1</sup> It is pleasing to note a particular emphasis by scholars upon the contested aspects of quality that have arisen from the variety of recent food scares;<sup>2</sup> but more worrying is a blindness in this literature to similar issues in earlier phases of the capitalist food economy.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> An earlier version of this paper was given at a conference on ‘Animals, vets and vermin in medical history’ at the University of East Anglia in 2000. I am grateful to colleagues for their comments on that occasion and to two anonymous referees for their helpful suggestions. I retain full responsibility for the views expressed.

<sup>1</sup> Henk Renting, Terry Marsden and Jo Banks, ‘Understanding alternative food networks: exploring the role of food supply chains in rural development’, *Environment and Planning A*, 35 (2003), pp. 393–411.

<sup>2</sup> David Goodman, ‘Agro-food studies in the age of ecology: nature, corporeality, biopolitics’, *Sociologia Ruralis*, 39 (1999), pp. 17–38; Jonathan Murdoch, Terry

Marsden and Jo Banks, ‘Quality, nature and embeddedness’, *Economic Geography*, 76 (2000), pp. 107–25; Pierre Stassart and Sarah Whatmore, ‘Metabolising risk: food scares and the un/re-making of Belgian beef’, *Environment and Planning A*, 35 (2003), pp. 449–62.

<sup>3</sup> There are several notable exceptions to this including Angela Tregear, ‘From Stilton to Vimto: using food history to rethink typical products in rural development’, *Sociologia Ruralis*, 43 (2003), pp. 91–107 and Keir Waddington, ‘Safe meat and healthy animals: BSE and bovine TB’, *History & Policy*, 4, site accessed June 2003, <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/main/policy-paper-04.html>.

Arguably the theoretical depth of the food networks literature would be improved by reference to historical case studies of the knowledge and understandings of quality and of the evolving working relationships between the various actors that constituted trust. In essence this paper is such a case study, concerning the politics of meat in the period 1889–1924 and the impact that one court case had upon the application of a particular and, as it transpired, an ephemeral, scientific consensus on the seizure of diseased carcasses as unfit for human consumption.

It is my contention that the institutional links between actors in the meat system, from graziers, cattle dealers and butchers, to local regulators and central legislators, are best understood in terms of the evolution of negotiated compromises and imposed sets of rules. The boundaries of negotiating power were especially fluid in the second half of the nineteenth century, a time of a rapidly expanding and structurally shifting cattle and meat economy. Railway transport and imports of chilled and frozen meat, were destabilising traditional relationships, creating new opportunities, and producing a complexity and scale of operations that was difficult for the state to absorb and accommodate. The legal and administrative frameworks that were in place proved to be inadequate to deal with the challenges, when they came, of epizootics such as cattle plague, foot and mouth, and pleuro-pneumonia.

The so-called ‘Glasgow case’ in 1889 was symptomatic of the early sparring that took place between a number of health-conscious local authorities and a profit-orientated butchery trade that paid little or no attention to disease. Here the Glasgow local authority successfully prosecuted a butcher and a meat wholesaler for illegally displaying diseased meat. They thereby created a precedent for attaching responsibility for quality to particular actors in the food system. As a result, *The Lancet* enthusiastically, if somewhat prematurely, pronounced the sale of tuberculous meat to be ‘now illegal ... even where disease is limited in distribution and the carcass otherwise apparently sound’.<sup>4</sup> The *Meat Trades Journal* pronounced this case to be ‘momentous in the extreme’, and the *Sanitary Record* saw it as ‘almost impossible to overestimate the importance of the decision given in Glasgow’.<sup>5</sup>

A heated debate was unleashed between the local state and the meat trade but the judgement also created friction between farmers and butchers. The latter wished to shift blame for unfit meat to the producers and discussed the possibility of requiring a warranty from their suppliers. Later, in 1908, the fledgling National Farmers’ Union drew the initial impetus for its foundation from this breakdown in trust and from the perceived need to protect the interests of small-scale cattle farmers from an onslaught by the middlemen.

The paper ends in 1924, the date of the Public Health (Meat) Regulations, which imposed quality standards and established a new conventional relationship between the various parties that lasted for forty years. The civil society of food producers, mainly in the form of a vast ‘countryside alliance’ of clubs, societies and campaigning groups, had been able to mobilize its social capital of contacts and fellow travellers, that inevitably drew in many rural MPs and various elements in Whitehall, to support the cause of the livestock farmer against having to give warranty of disease-free condition for fat animals being sold into a market or slaughterhouse.

<sup>4</sup> Anon, ‘Sale of diseased meat in Glasgow’, *Lancet*, 1 (hereafter *MTJCSG*), 1 June 1889, p. 12; *Sanitary Record* (1889), p. 1314.

<sup>5</sup> *Meat trades journal and cattle salesman’s gazette*

This had left the meat trade somewhat disadvantaged but they, in their turn, had fought and won a battle in Parliament to water down disease inspection regimes and to provide for financial compensation when meat had to be condemned.

The Glasgow case with its associated discourse of trust, responsibility and regulation is a subset of a wider debate in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that encompassed worries about the adulteration of foodstuffs and the deterioration in food quality and healthiness that was said by some hygienists to have arisen from the success of agro-industry, with its increasingly intensive farming, linked to processing and manufacturing.<sup>6</sup> Writers such as Terry Marsden and Laurent Thévenot provide theoretical justifications indicating that food systems crystallising out of the conventions outlined in the present paper may be understood to have common features that deserve detailed treatment.<sup>7</sup> This is because the period under review saw the birth and early evolution of elements of present-day food systems.

# I

Q. I understand you first examined the carcase of the bullock?

A. Yes.

Q. Tell us what you found.

A. On the left side of the bullock the disease was pretty well defined and very red all over the lining of the animal, about six inches by eight, all rosy red nodules ...’.

This was Peter Fyfe, Glasgow Sanitary Inspector (SI) under questioning by Comrie Thomson, counsel for the local authority at the trial of Hugh Couper and Charles Moore for the illegal possession of diseased meat for sale as human food.<sup>8</sup> The case was brought under Section 26 of the Public Health (Scotland) Act, 1867, and was regarded by all concerned as a test case of both the will and the ability of the local state to impose the highest standards of meat inspection indicated as appropriate by current science.

The background was an extraordinary prevalence of diseased meat in the markets of large cities and a nonchalance about it bordering on complacency among most actors in the food chain. Ten years earlier, in 1879, 80 per cent of the portions of meat sold in London were said to have been from tubercular animals, and in 1881 90 per cent of beasts inspected at the Metropolitan Cattle Market were estimated to have the disease.<sup>9</sup> In 1889, Dr George Goldie, Medical

<sup>6</sup> Michael French and Jim Phillips, *Cheated not poisoned? Food regulation in the United Kingdom, 1875–1938* (2000); Peter Atkins and Alessandro Stanziani, ‘From caveat emptor to caveat venditor: debates about milk falsification in France and Britain, 1850–1914’ (forthcoming, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Terry Marsden, Andrew Flynn and Michelle Harrison, *Consuming interests. The social provision of foods* (2000); Laurent Thévenot, ‘Innovating in “qualified” markets: quality, norms, conventions’, paper to conference on ‘Systems and Trajectories of Agricultural Innovation’, University of California, 23–25 April, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Anon., *Tuberculous meat: proceedings at trial under petitions at the instance of the Glasgow local authority against Hugh Couper and Charles Moore, before Sheriff Berry* (1889), QQ. 27–8.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Creighton, ‘Grounds for believing that the tubercular disease of animals which supply milk and meat for human use, is communicated by such food to man’, *Trans. of the seventh session of the International Medical Congress held in London, August 2nd–9th, 1881*, (4 vols, 1881), IV, pp. 481–6; Henry Behrend, *Cattle tuberculosis and tuberculous meat* (1893), p. 8.

Officer of Health (MOH) for Leeds, confirmed these worst fears when he claimed that 'I have no doubt that my town is largely fed on tuberculous meat'.<sup>10</sup>

There are two points to bear in mind, however, before we accept such data at face value. First, the London slaughter figures refer to dairy cows rather than to cattle generally, and the likelihood of their infection was greatly heightened by the confined and intensive conditions in which they were often kept.<sup>11</sup> For Britain as a whole, more representative data were gathered in 1892 when those animals suspected of suffering from a separate disease, pleuro-pneumonia, were slaughtered.<sup>12</sup> Of these, 22.3 per cent of cows and nearly 15 per cent of other cattle were found incidentally upon inspection to be tuberculous.<sup>13</sup> Second, there were regional variations of disease incidence, with cities such as London, Liverpool and Manchester suffering to a much greater extent than other parts of the country.<sup>14</sup> In Glasgow, for instance, 20 per cent of the 3,000 cows slaughtered between 1887 and 1889 had tuberculosis, but the figure for beef cattle in general was much lower, at 0.45 per cent.<sup>15</sup>

Amongst the general public, there was a suspicion that livestock owners and butchers were well aware of the problem but preferred concealment to remedial action. In the opinion of the Chief Veterinary Inspector for Manchester, 'it is perfectly easy to pass on to the public meat for consumption which is diseased'.<sup>16</sup> The problem was focused especially in small country slaughterhouses where 'tubered' meat was trimmed of all the visible evidence, for instance 'stripped' of the serous membranes, which often displayed tell-tale signs such as tuberculous nodules or 'grapes', before being sent on to poor city neighbourhoods for use in sausages.<sup>17</sup>

The Public Health Acts, 1867 in Scotland and 1875 in England and Wales with an Amendment Act in 1890, allowed for the seizure of unsound meat and animals but the powers were sparingly used. The definition of 'disease' used in the period under review was that of the 1878 Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act (CDA), which did not include tuberculosis. The responsibility for ensuring sound meat was left to the butcher, with spot checks arranged by the medical officers of health, and this led to much annoyance in the meat trade when stricter MOH arranged for confiscations of diseased meat.<sup>18</sup> Slaughtermen and butchers saw the medical officers of health as ill-informed and it is certainly true that most of them were unfamiliar with the

<sup>10</sup> Anon., *Tuberculous meat*, Q. 3450.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Atkins, 'The intra-urban milk supply of London, circa 1790–1914', *Trans. Institute of British Geographers*, new ser., 2 (1977), pp. 383–99.

<sup>12</sup> [John McFadyean] 'The prevention of tuberculosis in cattle', *J. Comparative Pathology and Therapeutics* (hereafter *JCPT*), 6 (1893), p. 353.

<sup>13</sup> See also the data for 1890–1 in the *Annual Report of the Director of the Veterinary Department*, BPP 1892 (C6630) xxvi. p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> For more about regional variations in the incidence of tuberculosis, see Richard Perren, *The meat trade in Britain, 1840–1914* (1978), pp. 135–6.

<sup>15</sup> Anon., *Tuberculous meat*, evidence of William Anderson (Q. 5,065), and John McLellan (QQ. 218–9).

<sup>16</sup> Alfred Holburn, 'Some suggestions with a view to the improvement of meat inspection in country districts', *London Congress, Section F, July 1905*, the *Royal Institute of Public Health* (1905).

<sup>17</sup> John Simon, 'Diseases of livestock in their relation to the public supplies of meat and milk', in *Fifth Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council*, 1862, BPP 1863 (161) xxv, pp. 21–32; *Annual Report of the Agricultural Department of the Privy Council Office on the contagious diseases inspection and transit of animals ... 1888*, BPP 1889 (C5679) xxvii, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> In his memoirs, Arthur Newsholme notes that he had a great deal of trouble with butchers contesting his condemnation of meat. Arthur Newsholme, *Fifty years in public health* (1935), pp. 237–8.

detail of meat inspection, and that all were hampered by the lack of textbooks for reference purposes.<sup>19</sup> Yet Ministers refused to acknowledge this as a problem. It was Walter Long, Tory MP and President of the Local Government Board, for instance, who in 1904 declared that 'the training which every registered practitioner must have received as a student is sufficient to render him competent to detect tuberculosis in a carcase'.<sup>20</sup>

Some cities employed specialist meat inspectors but on the whole these officials were modestly educated and many were even less *au fait* with disease symptoms than their employers.<sup>21</sup> It was not until 1899 that the Royal Sanitary Institute introduced a formal examination for meat inspectors, so very few were properly qualified at the turn of the century.<sup>22</sup> A return of meat inspectors in 1896 (Table 1) showed 191 employed by the London Boroughs and the City but only 26 in ten other English towns and cities and 31 in five Scottish urban areas. In Glasgow, policemen acted as inspectors until 1898 when they were replaced by qualified vets. This professionalization of meat inspection was a trend that was found increasingly across Scotland and also on the continent.<sup>23</sup> Another survey in England in 1904 showed that, of 206 meat inspectors, only two were vets.<sup>24</sup> Those listed in London were mostly sanitary inspectors, whereas in the provinces they were inspectors of nuisances. Cities such as Liverpool and Manchester relied on former butchers, and the continuing absence of formal qualifications such as meat inspection certificates in the return suggests that most local authorities were still looking for 'practical' rather than professional skills.

The situation in provincial England and Wales indicated in Table 1 was significantly behind that in other advanced countries, such as Belgium, France, Germany and Denmark, and it was certainly no match for the United States' meat inspection programme established in 1891 and formalized in the Federal Meat Inspection Act of 1906.<sup>25</sup> There is justification therefore in Ostertag's arch comment that 'England, which is otherwise so well organized with regard to public sanitation and called the cradle of hygiene, is entirely without a regulated system of meat inspection'.<sup>26</sup> Part of the explanation for this may lie in the rivalry between the medical officers of health who wished to retain their control over all aspects of public health inspection, and the veterinary surgeons, who, although they had all of the necessary practical experience to find evidence of disease in meat, were politically weak and lacked social status. The MOH did not consider vets to be competent to deal with matters affecting the public

<sup>19</sup> W. Brown, 'Examination of carcasses in cases of cattle tuberculosis', *Lancet*, 2 (1901), pp. 205–8.

<sup>20</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 137 (1904), col. 1359.

<sup>21</sup> Sir Herbert Maxwell (Chairman), 'General report', *Royal Commission on administrative procedures for controlling danger to man through the use as food of the meat and milk of tuberculous animals*, BPP 1898 (C8824) xlix, p. 343.

<sup>22</sup> Meat inspection was also on the syllabus of the Sanitary Inspectors' Examination Board, whose exams Sanitary Inspectors in London had to pass in order to qualify. *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 13 (1909),

col. 184.

<sup>23</sup> T. Dunlop Young, 'Meat inspection', in G. H. Collinge, T. Dunlop Young, and A. P. McDougall, *The retail meat trade: a practical treatise by specialists in the meat trade* (2 vols, 1929), I, p. 243.

<sup>24</sup> Return showing ... the number of sanitary inspectors, inspectors of nuisances, and other officers appointed to act as inspectors of meat ..., BPP 1904 (326) lxxxii, p. 727.

<sup>25</sup> T. Roberts, 'A retrospective assessment of human health protection benefits from removal of tuberculous beef', *J. Food Protection*, 49 (1986), pp. 293–8.

<sup>26</sup> Dunlop Young, 'Meat inspection', p. 244.

TABLE 1. Number of meat inspectors recorded in an official survey, 1896

| <i>City</i>                            | <i>Inspectors</i> |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------|
| London                                 | 191               |
| Glasgow                                | 13                |
| Portsmouth                             | 7                 |
| Edinburgh, Dundee                      | 6                 |
| Paisley, Liverpool                     | 4                 |
| Manchester, Blackpool                  | 3                 |
| Greenock, Birmingham, Bolton, Derby    | 2                 |
| Birkenhead, Bradford, Hull, Nottingham | 1                 |

*Source:* Return showing the number of officials employed as meat inspectors, BPP 1896 (74) lxviii, pp. 349–58.

health.<sup>27</sup> But in reality their own administrative response was also inadequate because both they and their sanitary inspectors and inspectors of nuisances had a wide range of duties, and food was certainly not their first priority.<sup>28</sup>

In policy terms, an extensive debate about tuberculous meat and milk in the 1880s had little practical impact. This is evidenced particularly in the inability of lobbyists to have tuberculosis treated on a par with rinderpest, where a draconian policy of slaughter and movement restrictions had been tried, or pleuro-pneumonia, where restrictions on imported livestock were enforced with increasing stringency over time.<sup>29</sup> The point here is that threats to the profitability of this important industry had more impact on the minds of policy-makers than the more nebulous threat to human health.

The Privy Council did have discussions with the Irish government in 1883 about cattle tuberculosis, although there is no evidence that imported stores were any more infected than home-bred animals. In the same year the National Veterinary Association passed a resolution in favour of scheduling tuberculosis under the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act of 1878, and further approaches to the Privy Council on this issue came in 1884 from the Yorkshire Confederation of Butchers' Associations and in 1885 from the town council of Hull.<sup>30</sup> Progress seemed possible in 1887 when Lord Cranbrook (President of the Council) and Lord Lothian (the Secretary of State for Scotland) met with the Police Commissioners of Paisley, one of the most progressive local authorities with regard to animal disease, in order to discuss the

<sup>27</sup> Peter Koolmees, John Fisher and Richard Perren, 'The traditional responsibility of veterinarians in meat production and meat inspection', in Frans Smulders (ed.) *Veterinary aspects of meat production, processing and inspection* (1999), pp. 7–26.

<sup>28</sup> Creighton, 'Grounds for believing'; A. Lydtin, G. Fleming, and M. van Hertsen, *The influence of heredity and contagion on the propagation of tuberculosis: and*

*the prevention of injurious effects from consumption of the flesh of tuberculous animals* (1883); Behrend, *Cattle tuberculosis*.

<sup>29</sup> Mick Worboys, *Spreading germs. Diseases, theories and medical practice in Britain, 1865–1900* (2000), ch. 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 342 (1890), col. 1554.

possibility of Orders in Council to allow the seizure of diseased carcasses.<sup>31</sup> Action did not follow immediately but the Departmental Committee which had already been planned to look at the problem of pleuro-pneumonia in cattle, had its brief extended to include tuberculosis.<sup>32</sup> The 1888 report of this committee was a milestone in two ways.<sup>33</sup> Evidence was collected for the first time on the tuberculosis threat via the food supply and, second, the committee recommended the scheduling of tuberculosis under the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act.<sup>34</sup> Had this been approved by the government, it would have meant the compulsory slaughter of animals, with farmers receiving 75 per cent compensation for the loss of value.

The Board of Agriculture, which was created in 1889, rejected the committee's recommendation to schedule tuberculosis under the CDA for six stated reasons: the problem of detecting tuberculosis in live animals; other diseases could be mistaken for tuberculosis; the threat to valuable pedigree herds if slaughter was indiscriminate; the valuation of cattle would be contentious; imported animals would have to be inspected, adding greatly to the burden of administration; and insufficient evidence that stockowners were willing to bear the loss and inconvenience of mass slaughter.<sup>35</sup>

It seems certain that the potentially massive cost of compensation was the real inhibiting factor.<sup>36</sup> The Veterinary Department of the Privy Council Office in their Annual Report for 1888 had also favoured compensation, and this issue of slaughter and who should pay for it actually became a major item in agricultural politics at the turn of the century.<sup>37</sup> We will return to it later.

## II

The discussion so far should be set in its international scientific context. Robert Koch's discovery of the tubercle bacillus in 1881 was the stimulus for much debate and experimentation in Europe in the decade that followed. Gradually sentiment solidified that both infected milk and diseased meat could be responsible for the transmission of the disease to humans. A number of important international congresses (listed in Table 2) highlighted the problem of bovine tuberculosis in particular. At the International Veterinary Congress of 1883, for instance, there was a campaign by Bouley, following the work of Toussaint, to encourage the seizure of any whole carcass that contained even a small portion of diseased meat, and this became a widely

<sup>31</sup> [John McFadyean] 'Tuberculosis in Scotland', *JCPT* 1 (1888), p. 98; *Royal Commission ...*, BPP 1898 (C8831) xlix, QQ 155–57. The Scottish connexion continued in 1888 when the Medico-Chirurgical Society of Edinburgh sent a memorial to the Privy Council asking for a consideration of tuberculosis in the meat and milk supply. Anon., 'Tuberculosis in relation to food supplies', *British Medical J.* 1 (1888), p. 759.

<sup>32</sup> The editor of the *Lancet* commented acridly that for economic reasons animal disease was being given more attention than human disease. Anon., 'The government and the use of tuberculous meat', *Lancet*, 1 (1890), p. 484.

<sup>33</sup> Jacob Wilson (Chairman), 'Report', *Departmental Committee into Pleuro Pneumonia and tuberculosis in the United Kingdom*, BPP 1888 (C5461) xxxii.

<sup>34</sup> This was supported by the Central Chamber of Agriculture. A. H. H. Matthews, *Fifty years of agricultural politics, being the history of the Central Chamber of Agriculture, 1865–1915* (1915), p. 35.

<sup>35</sup> *Royal Commission* (1898), Q. 167, evidence of Sir Thomas Elliott.

<sup>36</sup> [John McFadyean] 'Ought tuberculosis to be included in the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act?', *JCPT*, 8 (1895), pp. 145–8.

<sup>37</sup> BPP 1899 (C5679) xxvii, pp. 8–9.

TABLE 2. International conferences that made a contribution to the tuberculous meat debate, 1883–1901

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Location</i> | <i>Conference</i>                                             |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1883        | Brussels        | 2nd International Veterinary Congress                         |
| 1884        | The Hague       | 5th International Congress of Hygiene                         |
| 1885        | Paris           | 3rd International Veterinary Congress                         |
| 1888        | Paris           | 1st Congress for the Study of Tuberculosis in Man and Animals |
| 1889        | Paris           | 5th International Veterinary Congress                         |
| 1890        | Berlin          | 10th International Medical Congress                           |
| 1891        | London          | International Congress of Hygiene and Demography              |
| 1891        | Paris           | 2nd Congress for the Study of Tuberculosis in Man and Animals |
| 1893        | Paris           | 3rd Congress for the Study of Tuberculosis in Man and Animals |
| 1895        | Berne           | 6th International Veterinary Congress                         |
| 1898        | Paris           | 4th International Congress on Tuberculosis                    |
| 1899        | Baden Baden     | 7th International Veterinary Congress                         |
| 1899        | Berlin          | International Congress upon Tuberculosis                      |
| 1901        | London          | British Congress on Tuberculosis                              |

*Sources: BMJ, JCPT, Lancet, Veterinary Journal, Veterinary Record.*

sanctioned policy, which was then re-endorsed at the Paris (1888, 1889), and London (1891) congresses.<sup>38</sup> At Paris in July 1888 Chauveau was President of the Congress for the Study of Tuberculosis in Man and Animals and he seems to have been determined that a full airing should be given to the work of Villemin, Cornil and others on tuberculosis as a cross-species zoonosis.<sup>39</sup> He achieved an overwhelming consensus, confirmed by a vote with only three dissenters, in favour of a resolution that ‘there is reason to pursue, by every means, including the compensation of those interested, the general application of the principle of seizure and destruction of the entire flesh of tuberculous animals, whatever may be the gravity of the specific lesions found in these animals’. The following year, also in Paris, Chauveau and Nocard convened the 5th International Congress of Veterinary Medicine, with 635 delegates, only four of whom disagreed with the collective statement that ‘the flesh of tuberculous animals . . . ought to be excluded from consumption by men or animals, no matter what may be the degree of tuberculosis and the apparent qualities of the flesh . . .’.<sup>40</sup> The sentiment was similar in Paris in 1891, this time due to the ‘vehement pleading’ of Saturnin Arloing.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> [John McFadyean] ‘Congress for study of tuberculosis in man and animals’, *JCPT*, 1 (1888), pp. 262–75; [John McFadyean] ‘The inspection of tuberculous meat’, *JCPT*, 4 (1891), pp. 349–51; Saturnin Arloing, ‘Tuberculosis’, *JCPT*, 2 (1889), pp. 199–218; D. A. de Jong, ‘The use of the flesh of tuberculous animals’, *JCPT*, 12 (1889), pp. 315–25.

<sup>39</sup> Anon (ed.) *Comptes rendus et mémoires du congrès pour l’étude de la tuberculose chez l’homme et les animaux* (Paris, 1888); Anon., ‘Congress for the study of Tuberculosis in man and animals’, *JCPT*, 1 (1888), pp. 262–75.

<sup>40</sup> *JCPT*, 2 (1889), pp. 369–86.

<sup>41</sup> E. Nocard, *The animal tuberculosis, and their relation to human tuberculosis* (1895), pp. 87–9.

The Paris Congresses were very significant. They influenced opinion in Britain to the extent that many experts changed their view from one of scepticism concerning the need for regulation of tuberculous meat, to one of firm conviction that whole carcasses should be kept off the market even if only small amounts of diseased material were found. The Glasgow local authority was merely the highest profile example of such a damascene conversion.

The tide in favour of restrictions on diseased meat was in full flood in July 1888 when the French government passed a decree. This provided that wherever the tubercular lesions were not confined to the visceral organs and their lymphatic glands, or where lesions had erupted on the lining membrane of the chest or abdomen, the entire carcass should be condemned.<sup>42</sup> By 1892 there were equally strict laws in Prussia, Bavaria and Saxony requiring removal of a whole carcass when tuberculosis was generalized or the animal emaciated.

### III

On 9 May 1889 Peter Fyfe, Glasgow's Sanitary Inspector, entered the abattoir in Moore Street and seized two carcasses. One, belonging to a wholesale butcher Hugh Couper, was of a bullock, and the other was of a cow owned by Charles Moore, a meat salesman.<sup>43</sup> This apparently mundane incident proved to be highly significant in the history of the meat and livestock industries, and helps us to understand the evolution of this particular system of provision in Britain.<sup>44</sup>

The two butchers were asked if they would agree to the destruction (without compensation) of the carcasses, both of which showed signs of bovine tuberculosis. They declined and were prosecuted under the Public Health (Scotland) Act of 1867, which prohibited the sale of meat unfit for human consumption.<sup>45</sup> The Glasgow United Fleshers' Society paid Couper and Moore's costs in the court case that followed in the hope that a favourable verdict would protect the future interests of their members.<sup>46</sup>

The trial lasted four days. Unusually, the proceedings were published verbatim, and run to 414 pages of evidence, generated from 5430 questions asked of 35 witnesses.<sup>47</sup> These included eminent doctors, vets and medical officers of health, some of whom had travelled long distances from England. Overall this was a unique amount of effort for four sides of diseased beef but, in the words of Behrend, the case was 'epoch-making'.<sup>48</sup> This was because the trial was a step towards deciding two major issues: first, what is a minimum threshold of food quality that is acceptable; and, second, who in the food chain is responsible: the producer, the retailer, or the state?

<sup>42</sup> *JCPT*, 1 (1888), p. 288.

<sup>43</sup> The bullock had been bought via a cattle trader from an estate at Lunan, between Arbroath and Montrose in Angus.

<sup>44</sup> The Glasgow case was also a significant event in the acceptance of the germ theory in veterinary medicine. Mick Worboys, "Killing and curing"; veterinarians, medicine and germs in Britain, 1860–1900', *Veterinary Hist.* 7, (1992), pp. 53–71.

<sup>45</sup> In principle, powers of seizure existed under the Nuisances Removal Acts as embodied in the Public Health Act but they were very rarely used.

<sup>46</sup> There were over 300 members. *Royal Commission on market rights and tolls*, BPP 1890–1 (C6268) xxxvii, Q. 15,353.

<sup>47</sup> Anon, *Tuberculous meat*.

<sup>48</sup> Behrend, *Cattle tuberculosis*, p. 39.

The case hinged on whether the local authority had the right to seize a whole carcase that showed signs of tuberculosis, or whether the diseased parts should have been cut out and the rest allowed on to the market. Everybody seems to have agreed that generalized tuberculosis in the shape of an emaciated beast should mean full condemnation but expert opinion was divided in 1889 on the implications of disease localized to one small portion of the animal.<sup>49</sup>

The Glasgow local authority had not previously prosecuted meat dealers in this way but their MOH, Dr James Russell, took an interest in the issue of tuberculosis in the food supply.<sup>50</sup> He had earlier expressed his frustration at the lack of powers to deal with diseased, live animals and he had also spoken out in print on the contamination of milk.<sup>51</sup> No doubt at his instigation, the Public Health Committee met on 8 April 1889 and appointed a sub-committee on the inspection of dead meat.<sup>52</sup> On 26 April Chief Constable Boyd changed his orders to the police inspectors, instructing them to 'pass nothing [they] could see a speck of disease upon'.<sup>53</sup> Much hung on what was visible because, as evidence given in the course of this trial proved, there were still doctors and veterinarians who could not grasp the concept of microscopic infectivity and there were still others, not always the same individuals, who were unable even to accept the germ theory of disease. The latest thinking was most clearly described by John McFadyean:

Because, although tuberculosis may be ... always strictly local to commence with, there is a tendency, or there is the danger at any rate, of it becoming general if the bacilli burst into the bloodstream, and we can never declare with absolute certainty that in any particular carcass that has not occurred, because if the bacilli have gained access to the bloodstream and have settled in different organs to take some time, a week or ten days probably, to determine the formation of the tubercles.<sup>54</sup>

Care and attention is still required even in modern-day meat inspection because the (occasional) discovery of dry caseous masses in the bovine lung, udder, pleura or lymph nodes is an indication of generalized tuberculosis, which may have reached the muscles due to a breakdown of resistance. Nowadays about 70 per cent of an American meat inspector's time is devoted to necropsy, especially examining lymph nodes for the discoloration or morphological change associated with tuberculosis. In Australia 25 lymph nodes must be sliced and checked but there is evidence that even the most conscientious of abattoir inspections miss signs of tuberculosis.<sup>55</sup> In a recent experiment with one herd, the members of which were all tuberculin

<sup>49</sup> The 'entirely opposite opinions' expressed by scientists at the Glasgow trial caused alarm in the medical press. Anon, 'Tuberculosis in meat', *Lancet*, 2 (1889), p. 965.

<sup>50</sup> Russell was a controversial MOH. In 1885 he tried to take charge of the Sanitary Department but was thwarted. A few years later, the Glasgow case was an example of his tactical approach to infectious disease prevention. Edna Robertson, *Glasgow's doctor: James Burn Russell, MOH, 1837-1904* (1998).

<sup>51</sup> City of Glasgow, Mitchell Library, MP20.597, 'Report by the MOH regarding animals apparently unfit for human food', 1885; James Russell, *Sanitary*

*requirements of a dairy farm* (1889).

<sup>52</sup> Mitchell Library, MP29.168, 'Minutes of Health Committee on the inspection of dead meat, 1889'.

<sup>53</sup> Anon, *Tuberculous meat*, Q. 194.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, Q. 2,709.

<sup>55</sup> L. A. Corner, 'Post mortem diagnosis of *Mycobacterium bovis* infection in cattle', *Veterinary Microbiology*, 40 (1994), pp. 53-63; L. A. Corner, K. McCubbin, K. J. Small, B. S. McCormick, P. R. Wood, and J. S. Rothel, 'Efficiency of inspection procedures for the detection of tuberculous lesions in cattle', *Australian Veterinary J.*, 67 (1990), pp. 389-92.

test reactors, signs of tuberculosis were found in only 19 per cent by meat inspection in the abattoir but in 52 per cent under the most precise conditions of laboratory autopsy.<sup>56</sup>

The universal practice in England in 1889 was to require the removal of the visibly diseased meat only, but in Scotland local authorities were more aggressive. Greenock (since 1874), Paisley (from 1887), Falkirk and Edinburgh had for some time been destroying whole carcasses with even the slightest signs of disease.<sup>57</sup> At the trial it became clear that the two Glasgow carcasses would have been passed under the city's old rules, but the authority for the shift in policy was said to have come from science: 'no unbiased person fully acquainted with the evidence on both sides can entertain any other opinion than that the only course open to the Sheriff was to declare the two carcasses in question unfit for the food of man'.<sup>58</sup>

In his judgement, Sheriff-Principal Berry made several important pronouncements. The first was especially significant, that 'the view that tuberculosis is communicable from one of the lower animals to man must, as the evidence shows, be considered an established scientific fact ...'.<sup>59</sup> Although scientific opinion was generally along these lines, such an opinion remained controversial so long as Robert Koch continued to maintain that the danger to humans through meat and milk was minimal.<sup>60</sup> The judge went on to state that:

my conclusion from the evidence is that this is not a sufficient protection against the risk of communication of the disease by ingestion. There may be no appearance visible to the naked eye of the action of the tubercular bacillus in a particular part of the animal, and yet it may not improbably be there ... The evidence leads me to the conclusion that it would not be proper to trust to cooking to be of sufficient protection.<sup>61</sup>

Again, this was a bold assertion and one that was not borne out by research. A few years later Dr German Sims Woodhead reported that there was little danger to humans from tuberculous meat so long as it was adequately cooked.<sup>62</sup> It seems that the flesh of animals is rarely infected with tuberculosis to the same extent as the internal organs and cavities, and that the danger is therefore mainly in the offal or in the custom of feeding meat juice and raw meat to invalids.<sup>63</sup>

The third aspect of the judgement limited the universal application of the Glasgow case. Although Sheriff Berry commented that the present practice 'in various large towns in England' of stripping out tuberculous portions of carcasses 'is attended with danger to the public health', he nevertheless felt that:

I do not think that I require to take up the position that the carcase of every animal shown

<sup>56</sup> Corner *et al.*, 'Efficiency of inspection'.

<sup>57</sup> Anon, *Tuberculous meat*, QQ. 1258, 1911.

<sup>58</sup> [John McFadyean] 'The tuberculous meat cases at Glasgow', *JCPT*, 2 (1889), pp. 138–9.

<sup>59</sup> Anon, *Tuberculous meat*, p. 409.

<sup>60</sup> His most notorious pronouncement was his denial in 1901 that infected meat or milk presented any greater threat to humans than hereditary transmission. Barbara Rosenkrantz, 'The trouble with bovine tuberculosis', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 59 (1985), 155–75.

<sup>61</sup> Anon, *Tuberculous meat*, p. 411.

<sup>62</sup> He found that the temperature in the centre of a joint or roll of meat was not always sufficient during roasting to kill the bacilli; boiling was more efficient. 'Inquiry as to how far cooking processes destroy the infectivity of tubercle', *Royal Commission to inquire into effect of food derived from tuberculous animals on human health*, BPP 1895 (C7703) xxxv, Appendix, Inquiry III.

<sup>63</sup> John Francis, *Tuberculosis in animals and man* (1958), p. 38; *Royal Commission ...* (1895), QQ. 1410, 1694.

to have suffered from tuberculosis, however limited in degree or apparently localities, must be condemned ... The disease is shown [in this case] to have been not merely local. It was so far generalized as to extend to the lymphatic glands, and to parts which would have gone out into the market for food.<sup>64</sup>

In other words, the carcasses under review were in a category mid-way between the extremes of having only local signs of disease and being infectious in every part. McFadyean concluded that the 'decision has much less value as a precedent than it was expected to have'. This was because the trial came to focus on the need to condemn whole carcasses of animals with generalized tuberculosis and not on advanced, localized tuberculosis.<sup>65</sup>

Overall, the Sheriff found in favour of the local authority, a judgement that was quickly picked up nationally.<sup>66</sup> Although he claimed not to have read any newspaper accounts, he must have been aware of the publicity that surrounded the case. The *Glasgow Herald* in particular was responsible for stoking up public interest. From 20 April to 17 May it ran a fourteen-part analysis of the issues before the court hearing began, and then a daily report of the trial from 25 May to 21 June. Dugald McKechnie, counsel for Hugh Couper, saw this coverage as prejudicial to his client's interests, and remarked that 'if I had a jury here, I would have asked your Lordship to call *The Herald* to the bar for publishing on the eve of such an important trial as this'.<sup>67</sup>

#### IV

In retrospect, Sir Thomas Elliott, the Secretary of the Board of Agriculture, identified the year following the Glasgow case as being a hinge point. Before that his office had received representations from local authorities and public health societies wanting greater protection for consumers. From then on there was a much greater interest from meat trade associations worried about the seizure of diseased carcasses; from veterinary surgeons arguing that tuberculosis could be prevented from getting into the food chain by establishing a better system of inspection; and from County Councils and agricultural associations, especially in Scotland, urging slaughter with compensation.<sup>68</sup>

There was a flurry of activity after the trial. In Glasgow itself the local authority sent deputations to Manchester, Liverpool and Edinburgh to gather information on best practice in meat inspection. They also considered increasing their own meat inspectors from two to five, under the management of a 'trained and scientific veterinary surgeon'.<sup>69</sup> The United Fleshers' Society

<sup>64</sup> Anon, *Tuberculous meat*, p. 412.

<sup>65</sup> [John McFadyean], 'Important trial regarding tuberculous carcasses at Glasgow', *JCPT*, 2 (1889), pp. 180–95.

<sup>66</sup> *JCPT*, 2 (1889), pp. 138–9; *British Medical J.*, 2 (1889), pp. 1309–19, 1478; *Lancet*, 2 (1889), p. 1314; *MTJCSG*, 20 July 1889, p. 8; *Agricultural Gazette*, 24 June 1889, p. 599; *Cowkeeper and Dairyman's Journal*, July 1889, p. 1080; *Veterinary Record* (hereafter *VR*), 29 June

1889, p. 639.

<sup>67</sup> Anon, *Tuberculous meat*, Q. 1,705.

<sup>68</sup> See J. R. U. Dewar, 'The utilization of the flesh of tuberculous animals', *J. State Medicine*, 6 (1898), pp. 619–28, for estimates of losses of meat and critical comments about the severity of inspectors.

<sup>69</sup> Mitchell Library, MP20.601, 'Memorandum as to the inspection of meat in Glasgow by the Sanitary Inspector, 29 June 1889'.

and the Wholesale Butchers' Society immediately demanded representation on the Health Committee but they were unable to prevent planning for the relevant clauses in the Bill that was the following year to become the Glasgow Police (Amendment) Act (1890).<sup>70</sup> Nor did they materially influence Section 284 of the Burgh Police Act (1892), which gave local authorities in Scotland powers to replace all private slaughterhouses with public abattoirs.<sup>71</sup> This was gradually adopted over the next thirty years, leaving only the small rural slaughterhouses outside the fully regulated, city-based inspection system.

Following the Glasgow case, there was a tightening of meat control in some of those cities that had inspectors. This was most feasible in what Anne Hardy has called the 'pioneering municipalities', which had a 'modernizing, forward-looking approach to public welfare'.<sup>72</sup> Liverpool, Belfast, Leeds and Newcastle began confiscating whole carcasses where there was evidence of tuberculosis, but others remained lenient. Some vets and most farmers and meat traders criticized the 'excess of zeal' shown by a few MOH.<sup>73</sup> They cited the uncertain science, which made the diagnosis of tuberculous meat difficult for even experienced inspectors.<sup>74</sup> Most magistrates seem to have concurred because, of the 20,414 tuberculous carcasses seized by MOH between 1892 and 1895, only 2.13 per cent were actually condemned by the courts.<sup>75</sup> The President of the Board of Agriculture, Henry Chaplin, rejected confirmation of the Glasgow ruling from the centre, claiming that he had no power over meat.<sup>76</sup> He is reported to have said that 'so far as he could learn, there was at the present moment an enormous quantity of meat of this description consumed daily throughout the country without the slightest harm ...' and that 'the question was more for scientists and experts than for the Board of Agriculture. After the experts have settled the question, then it would be for the Board, if necessary, to do their part'.<sup>77</sup>

Such was the level of worry among the farming and meat trade interests about uncoordinated local action on diseased meat that they lobbied parliament immediately after the Glasgow judgement and their supporters, such as Lees Knowles MP, asked questions in the House of Commons and managed to force a short debate in 1890.<sup>78</sup> This was followed by a deputation of MPs to the Presidents of the Board of Agriculture and the Local Government Board. The influence of the Glasgow case is obvious here because of the several references made to standards of meat inspection varying between cities. As a result of this meeting, the Local

<sup>70</sup> 53 & 54 Vict., ch. ccxxi. Sections 19–22 gave powers of meat inspection and seizure, and Section 23 enabled proceedings against the original producer of diseased meat, as if he were an offender alongside the person selling the meat, and as if he had committed an offence in the city. Sections 20–23 of the Edinburgh Municipal and Police (Amendment) Act (1891), were similar.

<sup>71</sup> The United Fleshers' Society are reported to have appealed against the Glasgow judgement in the Court of Session. *British Medical J.* 1 (1890), p. 1478.

<sup>72</sup> Anne Hardy, 'Pioneers in the Victorian provinces: veterinarians, public health and the urban animal economy', *Urban Hist.*, 29 (2002), pp. 372–87. See also Peter Koolmees, 'Veterinary inspection and food hygiene in the twentieth century', in David F. Smith and Jim

Phillips (eds), *Food, science, policy and regulation in the twentieth century: international and comparative perspectives* (2000), pp. 53–68.

<sup>73</sup> J. R. U. Dewar, 'Tuberculosis', *Veterinarian*, 68 (1895), pp. 675–88.

<sup>74</sup> [John McFadyean] 'The inspection of tuberculous meat', *JCPT*, 4 (1891), pp. 349–51.

<sup>75</sup> *Return of number of carcasses seized*, BPP 1893/4 (485) lxxvii, p. 589; BPP 1895 (435) lxxxiv, p. 1159.

<sup>76</sup> *Cowkeeper and Dairyman's Journal*, May 1890, p. 113.

<sup>77</sup> *MTJCSG*, 104 (1890), pp. 6–7, 9–11; *The Times*, 22 Mar. 1890, p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 342 (1890), cols 1547–66.

Government Board, along with the Scottish Office, agreed to sponsor some research on the effects of diseased meat.<sup>79</sup> This took the form of the first of two Royal Commissions convened to consider aspects of the transmission of Tuberculosis between animals and humans.<sup>80</sup>

There was much cynicism about government motives, however. The editor of the *British Medical Journal* was scathing about what he saw simply as delaying tactics:

It was contended by those in authority that the matter was one to be left entirely for the present to 'scientists and experts'. It is thus that responsibility is evaded ... It should surely not be necessary to be able to prove beyond a certain reasonable probability that disease in cattle is dangerous to the community, in order that preventative measures should be taken.<sup>81</sup>

The leader writer of *The Times* was of a similar view. He called the first Royal Commission 'an absurdity' and 'an admirable machinery for the production of delay'. In his view, the reason that 'this commission dragged along its slow length for four weary years' was because politicians were 'professionally interested in the collective vote of the meat trade'. He argued that the scientific members, if they had been left to themselves, would have completed the enquiry in a 'small number of months'.<sup>82</sup>

In 1894 the chairman of this Royal Commission, Lord Basing, died and was replaced. It was then reconstituted to hear new evidence but the report was not released immediately, probably due to the General Election that was looming in 1895.<sup>83</sup> William Hunting, the editor of the *Veterinary Record* acidly commented that one reason for inaction, the stated problems of diagnosis, had now been removed with the advent of tuberculin, but there had been no change of heart in Westminster or Whitehall.<sup>84</sup> In his view 'everyone is sick of the prolonged exhibition of "how not to do it"'.<sup>85</sup> Later he accused the government of being 'afraid to issue it [the report] lest they should be compelled to legislate on a difficult question. The Local Government Board seem to be as timid as the Board of Agriculture about tuberculosis'.<sup>86</sup> The report was finally published in 1895.<sup>87</sup>

One reason for the sensitive nature of the findings of this commission was revealed in the minority report by Professor George Brown. He stated that he was 'unwilling to allow the alleged grievances of farmers and others concerned in the meat trade to pass altogether unnoticed' and demanded 'a properly regulated system of meat inspection by persons competent to

<sup>79</sup> *The Times*, 25 Apr. 1890, p. 12.

<sup>80</sup> *The Times*, 22 Mar. 1890, p. 11 and 24 Mar. 1890, p. 10. For comments by the trade press, see *MTJCSG*, 12 Apr. 1890, p. 102.

<sup>81</sup> Anon., 'The agricultural department and bovine tuberculosis', *British Medical J.* 1 (1890), pp. 791–2.

<sup>82</sup> *The Times*, 26 July 1895, p. 9.

<sup>83</sup> More than twenty questions were asked in the House complaining about the delays in publication.

<sup>84</sup> Tuberculin, although its intended therapeutic effects were disappointing, did prove to be useful from 1890 onwards as a diagnostic tool. The 'tuberculin test' involved injecting a suspected animal with a filtrate of

mycobacteria killed by heat. A raised temperature and a swelling were taken to be positive signs of infection. Keir Waddington, 'To stamp out "so terrible a malady". Bovine tuberculosis and tuberculin testing in Britain, 1890–1939', *Medical Hist.* 48 (2004), pp. 29–48.

<sup>85</sup> William Hunting, 'Tuberculosis: its prevention', *VR* 6 (1893/4), pp. 438–9.

<sup>86</sup> *VR* 7 (1894/5), p. 562.

<sup>87</sup> The main findings of this Royal Commission were the confirmation by experimental means of the potential spread of tuberculosis to humans by undercooked meat and raw milk. The report noted, however, that policy recommendations were beyond its brief.

judge as to the effect and character of the tuberculous deposits'.<sup>88</sup> He shied away from the issue of compensation but stressed that expert inspectors would provide a fair and professional service that would reduce the sense of injustice among meat traders.

Lees Knowles was one of a number of MPs who took a continuing interest in cattle tuberculosis. It was partly due to his pressure in the House in March 1890 that the first Royal Commission had been established and in March 1896 he moved that another enquiry, of extended scope, should be appointed to consider the administrative procedures that had been largely excluded from its predecessor's report.<sup>89</sup> The Local Government Board assented and commissioners were selected in July of that year.

## V

The pan-European consensus about the seizure of diseased meat so painstakingly built in the 1880s began to crumble in the 1890s. Some of the earlier government decrees were repealed, for instance in the case of Hesse Nassau in 1892, because they 'have repeatedly given rise to erroneous action'.<sup>90</sup> Both Nocard in France and McFadyean in Britain had consistently opposed the seizure of whole carcasses and it was their opinion that eventually prevailed at the International Congress of Hygiene and Demography in London in 1891 and the Sixth International Veterinary Congress in Berne in 1895.<sup>91</sup> McFadyean went further and was one of the few commentators to publish 'a protest against exaggeration' in the tuberculosis-from-food debate.<sup>92</sup> He was convinced that there was little danger of catching tuberculosis from eating infected meat.<sup>93</sup> For these views he was vilified by some of his colleagues for being 'a special pleader for a cowardly government' and as having appeared 'to minimize the importance of tuberculosis to agriculturalists and to consumers ...'.<sup>94</sup>

The report of the second Royal Commission (1898) was an interesting summary of the current views. On the one hand it played down the risk from infected meat but, on the other, it was in favour of improved, standardized procedures for the seizure of parts of carcasses or whole carcasses. This was because 'the widest discrepancy prevails in opinion and practice. Chaos is the only word to express the absence of system in the inspection and seizure of tuberculous meat ...'.<sup>95</sup> In future the Commissioners thought it essential for all meat inspectors to be qualified by having passed an appropriate examination but, crucially, they settled for cutting out

<sup>88</sup> *Royal Commission ...* (1895), pp. 635–7.

<sup>89</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 342 (1890), cols 1547–55; and 38 (1896), col. 126.

<sup>90</sup> *Royal Commission ...* (1898), p. 767.

<sup>91</sup> [John McFadyean] 'The danger of tuberculous meat', *JCPT*, 8 (1895), pp. 237–39; Anon., 'Sixth International Veterinary Congress', *JCPT*, 8 (1895), pp. 259–65. The new consensus was in favour of full condemnation only when the animal was emaciated (unanimous); had a bad appearance (50 votes to 5); when lesions were present in the muscular system (unanimous); or when important lesions were present in several viscera (71–18).

<sup>92</sup> [John McFadyean] 'A protest against exaggeration', *JCPT*, 12 (1899), pp. 269–73. He had made similar comments a decade before in his editorial 'The connection between human and animal tuberculosis', *JCPT*, 1 (1888), pp. 352–55, and at the 1889 Glasgow trial, QQ. 2,823–4.

<sup>93</sup> John McFadyean, 'Tuberculosis in cattle', *J. State Medicine*, 7 (1899), pp. 185–98.

<sup>94</sup> John McFadyean, 'The National Veterinary Association and tuberculosis: a personal explanation', *JCPT*, 12 (1899), pp. 250–52.

<sup>95</sup> *Royal Commission ...* (1898), BPP 1898 (C8824) xlix, p. 344.

meat with localized disease, thus ignoring the possibility of mycobacteria being present in the blood and lymphatic systems. Circulars from the Local Government Board in 1899, 1901 and 1904 clarifying the issue of seizure were based on the recommendations of the 1898 report.<sup>96</sup> In future, whole carcasses were to be seized only when: there was miliary tuberculosis of both lungs; tubercular lesions were visible in the muscular system, lymphatic system, or between muscles; there were lesions in the pleura and peritoneum; and tubercular lesions were found in any part of an emaciated carcass. The Local Government Board stressed that 'measures more stringent than those advocated by the Royal Commission are not called for' and they recommended that butchers who notified the local authority of diseased meat should not be prosecuted.<sup>97</sup> The latter point had been raised in a Select Committee on the 1904 Bill that we will discuss later.

The advice of the Royal Commission and the Local Government Board on the seizure of meat was now much clearer than anything that had been available before but it did not have the force of law and continued for many years to be interpreted very differently from authority to authority, to the extent that by the early 1920s there had developed a 'concentration of traders of inferior grades of meat in certain districts, where the standards of condemnation were less stringent'.<sup>98</sup> The recommendations on generalized tuberculosis were followed for a time, but by the 1920s:

many of the best inspectors had long given up following that advice, as savouring of panic legislation ... It was gradually becoming the opinion of many that there was no justification for the wholesale condemnation which took place in some districts of carcasses in localized bovine tuberculosis. Many inspectors reached the stage of using their own judgement entirely.<sup>99</sup>

Dr Henry Littlejohn, who had a long career as the MOH for Edinburgh, experienced the vicissitudes of intellectual fashions in meat inspection. In 1895 he reported that fifteen years before he would have 'passed carcasses in which tubercle was manifest, but now we consider it advisable to condemn all carcasses which show a certain condition of infection in the glands'.<sup>100</sup> By 1909 he had changed his mind again, returning to a pragmatic view that 'the risk of contracting tuberculosis by eating the meat of tuberculous animals is not so great as is generally believed'.<sup>101</sup> Even this length of time after the Glasgow case, there was genuine confusion amongst the regulatory community, with a full range of views expressed from rigorous intervention to inaction, and even a recommendation from one extreme group for the establishment of specially licensed outlets openly selling diseased meat, on the lines of shops in Copenhagen and the German Freibank system where such meat was sterilized with steam and retailed cheaply to the poor.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>96</sup> VR, 17 (1904/5), p. 172, from *The Times*.

<sup>97</sup> *The Times*, 8 Sept. 1904, p. 5.

<sup>98</sup> Gerald Leighton, *The principles and practice of meat inspection* (1927), p. 230.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Royal Commission ...* (1896), BPP 1896 (C7992) xlv,

Q. 1443.

<sup>101</sup> A. R. Littlejohn, 'Meat as a source of infection in tuberculosis', *The Practitioner*, 82 (1909), pp. 843–53.

<sup>102</sup> Gerald Leighton and Loudon Douglas, *The meat industry and meat inspection* (1910), pp. 396–97.

## VI

Moved to action by the Glasgow case, the meat trade embarked on a long campaign to protect their vested interests. In 1896 a delegation of the National Federation of Meat Traders lobbied the President of the Board of Agriculture and the Board of Trade and they also gave evidence to both the first and second royal commissions. In the last of these fora they expressed their bitter resentment at what they regarded as an arbitrary threat to their livelihoods. Most rejected cattle insurance as a solution.<sup>103</sup> They preferred either shifting the responsibility to the farmer by demanding a warranty of freedom from disease for the fat animals they supplied, or, alternatively, asking for compensation from the local rates or the central government.<sup>104</sup> The Edinburgh Master Butchers' Association did, however, take the warranty option in 1899, as did their colleagues in Cardiff in 1903.<sup>105</sup> But arguments over warranty led to frequent disagreements and ill-feeling between farmers and butchers, with occasional boycotts of markets by one side or the other.<sup>106</sup> Dealers and butchers received little encouragement from government about either warranty or compensation, the usual argument deployed being that risk was an understood part of the trade.<sup>107</sup> In its final report, the second royal commission was split four votes to three against compensation for diseased meat. By this stage it is fair to say that meat traders were feeling beleaguered and friendless:

For ten years the [Meat Traders'] Federation has been 'pegging away' at the tuberculosis question, and during that period not one single Agricultural Society or Farmers' Club has shown the slightest desire to discuss the subject with representative meat traders ...<sup>108</sup>

The year after the second commission's report, in 1899, the President of the Board of Agriculture, Walter Long, made a widely reported speech to farmers in Newcastle. In effect he enunciated the five principles that guided government action, or perhaps one ought to say inaction: first, that the data were still too indefinite and imprecise to justify asking parliament for public money for a slaughter policy or to subject livestock keepers to the inevitable financial loss; second, that there was no proof that a slaughter policy would eliminate bovine tuberculosis; third, that the Tuberculin Test could be fraudulently manipulated by the farmer; fourth, that expert opinion could not agree on the details of administering tuberculin; and fifth, that other forms of diagnosis, such as the veterinary inspection of udders, were not reliable.

<sup>103</sup> The use of mutual insurance schemes did eventually begin to catch on. There were examples in Paisley (1887), West Hartlepool (1891), Carlisle and Belfast. The Newcastle, Gateshead & District Butchers Association (1892) charged a premium of 1s. per animal that adequately covered the cost of a two-thirds compensation to the owners of condemned carcasses. In other regions premiums were shared equally between farmers and meat traders. *Royal Commission* ... (1898), QQ. 585, 4,384, 5,792, 6,054, and 6,266; J. Share-Jones, 'Animal husbandry and public health (livestock insurance)', *J. State*

*Medicine*, 35 (1927), pp. 559–69; Harold Sessions, *Cattle tuberculosis: a practical guide to the agriculturalist and inspector* (1905), pp. 108–111; Leighton and Douglas, *Meat industry*, pp. 1331–58.

<sup>104</sup> *Royal Commission* ... (1898), QQ. 349–50, 441–7, 585; Perren, *The meat trade in Britain*, p. 149.

<sup>105</sup> *VR*, 11 (1899), p. 391; 16 (1903/4), pp. 218–19.

<sup>106</sup> A. Wilson, 'Tuberculosis from a farmer's point of view', *VR*, 9 (1896/7), pp. 292–3.

<sup>107</sup> *Royal Commission* ... (1898), pp. 347–8.

<sup>108</sup> *VR*, 12 (1899/1900), p. 107.

In short,

at present too little was known, too much doubted, for Parliament to be justified in imposing upon the country heavy expenditure on wholesale restrictions which would be strongly resisted in many quarters, and which might not do anything effectual for the extinction of the disease.<sup>109</sup>

The question of compensation refused to go away and indeed became a chronic problem for successive governments over the next quarter of a century. Questions in the House on this began in 1899 and fending them off became a regular feature of the President of the Local Government Board's performance at the despatch box. A steady trickle of petitions also came from bodies such as the Smithfield Club, The Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, the Central Chamber of Agriculture, the British Dairy Farmers' Association, and so on.<sup>110</sup> The standard response was that the government had no immediate plans for legislation on compensation for the detection of tuberculosis in cattle.

Numerous attempts were made by MPs to introduce legislation compelling local authorities to pay compensation for seized meat. In 1901 a private members' Bill was introduced, unsuccessfully, to the House of Commons to amend the law relating to the compensation paid for slaughtered animals, and four other, similar bills (listed in Table 3) were brought in between 1903 and 1906. They all had cross-party support and several MPs co-sponsored two, three or four of these Bills. The 1904 Bill, with support from the Central Chamber of Agriculture and the meat trade, was the only one to reach a Second Reading but it fell because of opposition from MPs who wanted compensation to come from central rather than local funds.<sup>111</sup> The objection was on the lines of 'why should the slaughtering districts, usually in or near towns, meet the cost of disease originating in the breeding areas?' A Select Committee reported on this Bill in 1904 but their comment was that the loss to butchers was not great because most disease was concentrated in older stock of lower value and their recommendation was that mutual insurance should pay for half of any loss, with the other half coming from government.<sup>112</sup>

A Tuberculosis (Animals) Committee was formed in 1908 to represent farmers' and landowners' societies from all over the country in response to the threat of legislation about the slaughter of tuberculous animals (cattle and pigs).<sup>113</sup> It was chaired by the conservative figures Lord Middleton and the Earl of Northbrook, and supported by the eminent veterinarian John McFadyean.<sup>114</sup> Its first task was to hear the butchers' case for protection from loss incurred

<sup>109</sup> This quotation is from a speech by Walter Long when he had been President of the Board of Agriculture. Sheridan Delépine, 'How can the tuberculin test be utilised for the stamping out of bovine tuberculosis?', in *Trans. British Congress on Tuberculosis for the Prevention of Consumption, London, July 22nd to July 26th, 1901* (4 vols, 1902), II, p. 239.

<sup>110</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 66 (1899), col. 1055; 80 (1900), col. 1315.

<sup>111</sup> Waldorf Astor (Chairman) *Departmental Committee on Tuberculosis*, BPP 1912–13 (Cd 6654) xlviii, p. 68;

*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 133 (1904), cols 327–47.

<sup>112</sup> First Reading 5 Feb., Second Reading 15 Apr., Select Committee appointed 8 June, Report Stage 19 July, BPP 1904 (16) iv, p. 599; *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 129 (1904), col. 483; 135 (1904), col. 1084; 138 (1904), col. 430.

<sup>113</sup> A full list is given in *The Times* for 16 Jan., 28 Feb. and 9 Oct. 1908.

<sup>114</sup> It was an ad hoc pressure group that lasted until 1920.

TABLE 3. Unsuccessful Bills, 1901–06

| <i>Name of Bill</i>                                            | <i>Sponsor</i> | <i>Proposed<br/>compensation<br/>(per cent)</i> | <i>Who pays (per cent)</i> |                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
|                                                                |                |                                                 | <i>Local</i>               | <i>Central</i> |
| Diseased Animals Compensation Bill (1901)                      | Louis Sinclair | 25–50                                           | 50                         | 50             |
| Tuberculosis (Animals) Compensation Bill (1903)                | Ernest Gray    | 100                                             | 100                        | –              |
| Tuberculosis (Animals) Compensation Bill (1904)                | R. J. Price    | 100                                             | 100                        | –              |
| Tuberculosis (Animals) Prevention and Compensation Bill (1905) | William Field  | 66                                              | 50                         | 50             |
| Tuberculosis (Animals) Prevention and Compensation Bill (1906) | Ernest Gray    | 66                                              | 50                         | 50             |

*Note:* For parliamentary formalities, see: *PD*, 125 (1903), col. 816; 144 (1905), col. 663; 152 (1906), col. 805.

*Sources:* BPP 1901 (244) i, p. 15; 1903 (280) iv, p. 767; 1904 (16) iv, p. 599; 1904 (272) vii, p. 429; 1904 (16) iv, p. 599; 1904 (272) vii, p. 429; 1905 (152) v, p. 481; 1906 (53) v, p. 527

when they bought healthy-looking animals, only later to have their meat condemned when tuberculosis was identified by the meat inspector. The Committee deplored the lack of cooperation between the farmers and butchers and proposed that they should hold a joint conference to air the grievances on both sides.<sup>115</sup> This was the same year that the National Farmers' Union was founded as a direct result of the demand by the National Federation of Meat Traders' Associations that graziers should give a warranty of health on their cattle.<sup>116</sup> It was realized that the Central Chamber of Agriculture, although it was ultimately successful in negotiating a climb-down by the butchers on this issue in 1909, was dominated by landowner interests and that the voice of farmers needed to be heard separately.<sup>117</sup>

Despite much lobbying and political manoeuvring, very little was achieved before 1914 in solving the problem of tuberculous meat. It took the disruption of a war to facilitate change.

## VII

During the First World War the freedom of the meat trade was curtailed. Butchers were allocated cattle rather than being able to buy them on an open market and, as a result, they found

<sup>115</sup> *The Times*, 9 Oct. 1908, p. 9 and 7 Jan. 1909, p. 8.

<sup>116</sup> Graham Cox, Philip Lowe and Michael Winter, 'The origins and early development of the National Farmers Union', *AgHR*, 39 (1991), pp. 30–47. The NFMTA had been founded in 1886–7. By 1910 it had a membership of 14,000 in 148 associations.

<sup>117</sup> The warranty had originally been due to come into force in October 1908 but the President of the Board of Agriculture is reported to have persuaded the butchers to hold fire for a year. See the House of Lords debate on this issue in *Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, 195 (1908), cols 921–31.

it impossible to avoid diseased carcasses. In recognition of any involuntary loss they were compensated out of central funds. In 1920 the emergency arrangements ceased and so did the compensation. This caused disquiet in the trade and in June of that year a combined deputation of the wholesale and retail interests visited the Ministry of Health.<sup>118</sup> Because the government was under pressure in the press and in parliament due a number of meat-related issues, such as decontrol, retail prices, and problems related to imports, an enquiry was set up in the form of a departmental committee on meat inspection chaired by Sir Horace Monro.<sup>119</sup> The report of this Committee was completed in July 1921 and the Minister (Sir Alfred Mond) agreed to implement most of the recommendations the following March.<sup>120</sup> The results were enshrined in Memo 62/Foods (1922), the Public Health (Meat) Regulations (1924), the Public Health (Meat) Regulations (Scotland) (1924), and the Rural District Councils (Slaughterhouses) Order (1924).<sup>121</sup> The Memo gave detailed instructions on meat inspection and the most thorough definition yet of the meat that should be condemned.<sup>122</sup> The whole carcass was to be seized only when the animal had been emaciated or there were signs of generalized tuberculosis.<sup>123</sup> No compensation was to be paid to the butcher. The Regulations laid down conditions for killing animals and required any disease found by the slaughtermen to be reported to the local authority. The parallel Public Health (Meat Inspection) Regulations (Scotland) (1923) were stronger than the Memo and their definition of a meat inspector gave greater prominence to vets. It had the statutory backing of the Public Health (Scotland) Act, 1897. The disadvantage of both sets of rules was that they were adoptive: local authorities were not compelled to use them and many used this loophole to avoid expenditure.<sup>124</sup>

One difficulty was in inspecting and controlling the abundance of small private slaughterhouses, 20,000 in 1927.<sup>125</sup> The municipalization of abattoirs, theoretically possible under the Public Health Act (1875), was one possibility to gain full control and impose standards, but such slaughter facilities existed in only fifty towns in England and Wales by 1899 and 100 in 1930.<sup>126</sup> Since 1849 the Scots had been aiming to emulate the German tradition of a public monopoly of slaughtering in cities, a process accelerated by the Burgh Police (Scotland) Act (1892). By 1910

<sup>118</sup> A. John Jackson, *Official history of the National Federation of Meat Associations (Incorporated)* (1956), p. 104.

<sup>119</sup> PRO, MH 56/65–67, 'Departmental Committee on Meat Inspection'.

<sup>120</sup> Sir Horace Monro (Chairman) *Report of the Departmental Committee on the legislative and administrative measures necessary to secure adequate protection for the health of the people in connection with the slaughter of animals and distribution of meat for human consumption in England and Wales* (1921).

<sup>121</sup> 'Memorandum on a system of meat inspection recommended by the Ministry of Health for adoption by Local Authorities and their officers', Memo 62/Foods, 16 Mar. 1922.

<sup>122</sup> B. De Vine, 'The Public Health (Meat) Regulations, 1924', *J. Royal Sanitary Institute*, 47 (1927), pp. 654–62.

<sup>123</sup> Generalization was to be inferred from the

following check list: miliary tuberculosis of both lungs; lesions multiple, acute and actively progressive; multiple and widespread infection of lymph glands; diffuse acute lesions of both serous membrane (pleura and peritoneum) and any lymph glands enlarged or contain visible lesions; in addition to lesions in respiratory tract or digestive tract, also lesions in spleen, kidney, udder, uterus, ovary, testicle, brain, or spinal cord; congenital tuberculosis in calves.

<sup>124</sup> Collinge *et al.*, *Retail meat trade*, p. 274; William MacGregor, 'The unification of control of animal diseases and of the meat and milk supply', *J. State Medicine*, 43 (1935), pp. 156–65.

<sup>125</sup> J. McAllan, 'Common difficulties in meat inspection', *J. Royal Sanitary Institute*, 46 (1925), pp. 391–94, 391; Collinge *et al.*, *Retail meat trade*.

<sup>126</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 239 (1930), col. 590–1.

60 per cent of burghs had public slaughterhouses and in 1930, 80 per cent of home killed cattle in Scotland passed through these abattoirs.<sup>127</sup> Such municipal enthusiasm was not common south of the border until after 1966, partly because of the political strength of the farming and meat industries.<sup>128</sup> Shirley Murphy, MOH to the London County Council, for instance, had suggested the abolition of private slaughterhouses in 1899 but this brought complaints from the London Butchers' Trade Society, who argued that meat was not the main means by which tuberculosis was spread.<sup>129</sup> In 1912 the National Federation of Meat Traders threatened to sue any local authority that tried to close down private slaughter houses.<sup>130</sup>

For William Savage, 1924 was a turning point. 'Previous to the passing of these Regulations it may be said that, apart from a few progressive districts, meat inspection in rural areas was non-existent'.<sup>131</sup> He would have preferred all premises to be licensed but at least the slaughterhouses were now subject to bye-laws regarding structure and cleansing. He pointed out that in Somerset, where he was MOH, only five out of seventeen rural sanitary inspectors had a special meat inspector's certificate, yet they were the ones responsible for the enforcement of the regulations. Much more meat was condemned in the areas where the sanitary inspector had a certificate. 'It is obvious that unless an inspector possesses the necessary knowledge and experience, meat inspection is going to be a farce'. The time devoted to inspection also varied a great deal: '... in many rural areas it is a fairly easy matter to deal with unsound meat and dispose of it without any inspection having taken place'.<sup>132</sup>

In September 1937, Memo 62a/Foods provided an update on meat inspection but the situation remained largely unchanged from 1922 to 1963.<sup>133</sup> In 1950, even though many tuberculous cows were being slaughtered under the nationwide eradication programme, it was rare to condemn whole carcasses. The economic loss would have been too great and 68 per cent of the meat of diseased cows was passed as fit for human consumption.<sup>134</sup> The principle remains today, with careful butchery and excision of specified bovine offals being considered sufficient, for instance, to minimize the danger of BSE to the public.<sup>135</sup> In practice cross-infection from contaminated abattoir equipment and surfaces has always been a risk factor.<sup>136</sup> The 1955 Food & Drugs Act gave new powers of inspection to local authorities, 'but some meat still leaves slaughter-houses uninspected'.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>127</sup> Dunlop Young, 'Meat inspection'; Koolmees *et al.*, 'The traditional responsibility of veterinarians', p. 12; Leighton and Douglas, *Meat industry*, p. 371; Leighton, *Principles and practice*, p. 7; *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 239 (1930), col. 531.

<sup>128</sup> Koolmees *et al.*, 'The traditional responsibility of veterinarians', p. 12.

<sup>129</sup> London Butchers' Trade Society, *Inspections of meat and milk* (1899).

<sup>130</sup> *Medical Officer*, 8 (1912), pp. 1–2.

<sup>131</sup> William Savage, 'The working of the 1924 meat regulations in rural areas', *J. State Medicine*, 34 (1926), pp. 716–22.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 719.

<sup>133</sup> PRO, MAF 35/313.

<sup>134</sup> John Francis, 'The economic importance of bovine tuberculosis', *Proc. First International Seminar on Bovine Tuberculosis for the Americas, Santiago, Chile, 21–25 September 1970* (1972), p. 101.

<sup>135</sup> Francis Smith, *The retreat of tuberculosis, 1850–1950* (1988), p. 181.

<sup>136</sup> John McFadyean, 'Experiments with expressed muscle juice from tuberculous carcasses', in *Annual Report, Veterinary Department* (1890), pp. 13–19; D. G. Pritchard, 'A century of bovine tuberculosis, 1888–1988: conquest and controversy', *J. Comparative Pathology*, 99 (1988), pp. 376.

<sup>137</sup> Sir John Winniffrith, *The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food* (1962), p. 179.

## VIII

This paper has essentially been about negotiated food quality in the context of relationships between actors constructed through the law courts and regulatory frameworks legislated in Parliament. Such conventions are by no means unusual but an interesting feature here has been the role of science. Between approximately 1885 and 1895 the theoretical consensus amongst vets and the medical officers of health was in favour of the seizure of whole carcasses that had even localized tuberculosis, although the practical application of this knowledge varied considerably. After that there was a shift to a much milder view of the risks associated with diseased meat, but the relationships between all of the interested parties, based before 1885 on a combination of ignorance and what amounted to a conspiracy of silence, had been destabilized to such an extent that there was no going back. After 1895 there were thirty years of guerrilla warfare between farmers and meat traders, and between traders and meat inspectors, before eventually the report of a departmental committee in the early 1920s provided the basis for a series of compromises.

# Kids in the Corn: School Harvest Camps and farm labour supply in England, 1940–1950

by R. J. Moore-Colyer

## Abstract

This article is concerned with the contribution of schoolchildren towards the food production drive in England during the Second World War. After a consideration of the broader aspects of the farm labour problem between 1940 and 1950, the focus is directed towards the various official and semi-official schemes by which children were involved in summer and autumn harvest work. Logistical, operational and financial issues are reviewed in some detail along with various aspects of gender and attitudes of interested parties towards the scheme. While harvest camps generally seem to have been a positive and enjoyable experience for school children, there remains a great deal of scope for oral history studies to elucidate the finer details.

The singular contribution of home-based farming to the survival of the United Kingdom during the Second World War and the critical years immediately following the conflict was widely realized at the time and has subsequently been recognized by a variety of contemporary scholars.<sup>1</sup> If Lord Murray's magisterial official history occasionally exaggerates the achievements of the wartime food production campaign, the fact remains that by 1940–1 two million extra acres of grassland had been converted to arable so that the land area under wheat and potatoes advanced by 43,000 acres and 128,000 acres respectively, alongside an expansion of 1.48 million acres of other grains and 56,000 acres of forage crops. As more pasture land fell under the plough in 1941–4, the acreage of permanent grass declined by 34 per cent from that of 1938, while the area cropped to potatoes alone exceeded its pre-war level by some 92 per cent.<sup>2</sup> The dramatic and well-documented increases in output were, of course, orchestrated by the Ministry of Agriculture through its County War Agricultural Executive Committees (established under Regulation 66 of the Defence (General) Regulations of 1939), with the Ministry of Food being mandated to oversee the marketing and distribution of the produce. Agricultural production and marketing were, in effect, subject to the strictest of controls and surveillance as CWAECs attempted, sometimes controversially, to enforce orders and maintain standards.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. J. Hammond, *Food and agriculture in Britain, 1939–45* (1954), p. 229; Ministry of Information, *How Britain was fed in wartime, 1939–45* (1946), pp. 5–6; J. Burnett, *Plenty and want. A social history of diet in England from 1815 to the present day* (1968), *passim*; J. Brown, *Agriculture in England. A survey of farming, 1870–1947*

(1987), pp. 125–30; J. Martin, *The development of modern agriculture. British farming since 1931* (2000), pp. 42–52.

<sup>2</sup> K. A. H. Murray, *History of the Second World War. Agriculture* (1955), p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> B. Short, C. Watkins, W. Foot and P. Kinsman, *The National Farm Survey, 1941–1943* (2000), pp. 45–7.

Although Murray and, more recently, Armstrong, have discussed the overall labour situation in agriculture during the war years, the literature on the various labour sources available to farmers to deal with the expanded output remains sparse. It is the object of the present article to address this issue, at least in part.<sup>4</sup> The first section considers the broader aspects of the labour problem between 1940 and 1950, before the focus shifts to a rather more detailed study of the role of schoolchildrens' labour in the drive to increase home food output.

## I

At the outbreak of war, farmers in England and Wales were confronted with a potential labour crisis as many younger workers joined the armed services and others, attracted by higher wages and better working conditions, left their employment to join the thousands of labourers engaged in the building of the camps, aerodromes and other military institutions being constructed up and down the country.<sup>5</sup> Concurrently the traditional annual seasonal inflow of migratory Irish labour ceased. Irish citizens working on British farms returned to the Republic after September 1939 only to reappear (in rather smaller numbers) when the war was at an end.

As men flocked to the Territorial Army or the National Service, alarm bells began to ring in official circles and the government's Food Production Committee concluded that measures were urgently required to reduce the flow of labour from the farming industry. Eventually, after lengthy discussion with the Trades Unions and an increase in the statutory minimum wage to 48s. weekly in June 1940, the Minister of Labour was empowered to prohibit employers in other trades from engaging male agricultural workers.<sup>6</sup> While this was to some degree effective, it proved virtually impossible to stem the haemorrhage since agriculture was not yet a reserved occupation, and the question of how to secure the 1940 harvest (when it was reckoned that 100,000 additional hands would be required) still remained. At this stage the Women's Land Army was a modest force of 11,700 and although its membership was to reach 82,000 by August 1943, numbers subsequently declined as increasing cohorts of women were required for the aircraft and munitions industries (Table 1).

Prisoners of war were similarly in short supply in the first years of the war. A few thousand Italians and Germans, together with alien internees, were available in 1940 and some 20,000 additional prisoners by the summer of 1942, but it was not until after Wavell's successful campaign in Libya that this source of farm labour became relatively plentiful.

The official statistics for agricultural labour are set out in Table 2 which indicates both the growing importance of different forms of casual labour and the developing role of female workers as the war progressed. However, since no official records were kept of the large number of adults who volunteered harvest labour, or the help given to farmers by the armed forces, or the contribution of the Emergency Land Corps and the many Voluntary Land Clubs, Table 2 tells but part of the story.

<sup>4</sup> A. Armstrong, *Farm Workers. A social and economic history, 1770-1980* (1988).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>6</sup> Undertakings (Restriction on Engagements) Order, 1940.

TABLE 1. Women's Land Army Membership, 1940–1950

|      |        |
|------|--------|
| 1940 | 11,700 |
| 1941 | 21,900 |
| 1942 | 53,200 |
| 1943 | 87,000 |
| 1944 | 47,861 |
| 1945 | 43,124 |
| 1946 | 23,017 |
| 1947 | 17,682 |
| 1948 | 16,942 |
| 1949 | 11,210 |
| 1950 | 6824   |

Sources: *Agricultural Statistics, 1939–51*; Brown, *Agriculture in England*, p. 138.

TABLE 2. Agricultural Labourers in England and Wales, 1938–1947

|      | <i>Total Regular<br/>Workers</i> | <i>Proportion of<br/>Females (%)</i> | <i>Total Casual<br/>Workers</i> | <i>Proportion of<br/>Females (%)</i> |
|------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1938 | 513431                           | 8                                    | 79692                           | 32                                   |
| 1939 | 511131                           | 8                                    | 95998                           | 34                                   |
| 1940 | 501537                           | 9                                    | 106344                          | 41                                   |
| 1941 | 508150                           | 10                                   | 141434                          | 43                                   |
| 1942 | 540791                           | 16                                   | 167445                          | 47                                   |
| 1943 | 542504                           | 19                                   | 176712                          | 48                                   |
| 1944 | 516074                           | 22                                   | 151336                          | 42                                   |
| 1945 | 515408                           | 19                                   | 153387                          | 41                                   |
| 1946 | 537097                           | 13                                   | 103836                          | 39                                   |
| 1947 | 548428                           | 12                                   | 131895                          | 36                                   |

Source: *Agricultural Statistics, 1938–1947*

Survival on the home front depended above all on the successful gathering of the cereal and root crop harvests by the regular workforce enhanced by a remarkable combination of local and urban volunteers, reservists, students, youth service volunteers, voluntary labour clubs, schoolchildren, and of course, the Womens Land Army, prisoners of war and displaced persons of varying nationalities. For urban volunteers in particular, wartime fieldwork was often their first genuine encounter with the countryside and for those of them who were also evacuees, contact with rural people and the rural way of life was something quite new. Whether it was an experience to be recalled with pleasure or erased from the memory in future years

depended on the relative preparedness of an individual to accept country ways and on the tolerance of rural hosts of the townspeople's different way of looking at things. The well-known suspicion of evacuees towards their hosts ('posh' country people, 'backward', 'snobbish') and of country people towards them ('dirty', 'verminous', 'painted-and-powdered women') might, it could be argued, have exacerbated the pre-existing rural-urban divide.<sup>7</sup> The various tensions were noted by recorders for Mass Observation although, as Alun Howkins has observed, contact with country life may, in reality, have softened the divisions. As a result many urban people probably came to view the countryside both as a source of productivity and as a site of leisure which, of course, it was increasingly to become in the post-war world.<sup>8</sup>

In any event, evacuees and their families and a host of volunteers contributed massively to the harvests of 1940 and 1941 and with the call-up of 10,000 additional skilled workers following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Minister of Agriculture, R. S. Hudson appealed for further assistance in the summer and autumn of the next two years. As CWAECs drew up lists of volunteers (with the co-operation of the National Farmers Union, the Womens Voluntary Service and the National Federation of Womens Institutes), Hudson's speeches began to hint at the possibility of compulsion should the requisite voluntary labour not materialize.<sup>9</sup> The 80,000 military personnel who had worked in the harvest fields in 1942 were no longer available the following year. Faced with the need to attract 150–200,000 adult volunteers and in excess of 300,000 children, Hudson repeatedly implored people to support the thousand or more harvest camps for adults which would be established in 1943 where volunteers would be paid at rates set by county Agricultural Wages Boards. Hudson fondly hoped that people would forgo their annual holiday for the opportunity of attending a harvest camp where they would enjoy the open air and ENSA concerts and eventually return home with money in their pockets. His appeal met with a massive response and, by April, recruiting centres in towns, factories, shops and offices were inundated with requests for places in harvest camps. Meanwhile the farmers began to mutter, with correspondents to *Farmers Weekly* stridently suggesting that however valuable volunteer farm labour may be, perhaps the thousands of prisoners-of-war eating their way through British harvests should be *compelled* to work on the land. After all, as a member of the West Riding CWAEC put it, the Germans had forced civilians in the occupied territories to labour on German soil, so why should not their captured soldiers sweat under an English sun? This point was echoed by the Kettering farmer Dennis Hutchinson who further observed that harvest holiday camps were all very well, but for the average munitions worker a holiday by the seaside was a rather more attractive proposition than a fortnight's labouring on a farm.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the volunteers continued to offer themselves and corn and potato harvests were duly gathered.

Early in 1944 the Ministry of Agriculture reorganized its system of coordinating the volunteer labour force by establishing six regional offices to serve as focal points for satisfying the labour requirements of farmers. Potential volunteers were advised to write to their regional

<sup>7</sup> T. L. Crosby, *The impact of civilian evacuation in the Second World War* (1986), pp. 2–3.

<sup>8</sup> A. Howkins, 'A country at war: Mass Observation and rural England, 1939–45', *Rural Hist.*, 9 (1998), p. 92.

<sup>9</sup> *Farmer's Weekly* (hereafter *FW*), 28 Feb., 26 Sept. and 19 Dec. 1941.

<sup>10</sup> *FW*, 13 Apr. 1943.

office whereupon they would be supplied with details of the CWAEC official responsible for harvest camps in the county of their choice. Given that land under cultivation increased by a further 700,000 acres in 1944, every available hand was required, and in issuing the now usual appeal for volunteers, Tom Williams, at the time Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, allied his call with a request to urban employers to stagger workers' holiday times so that instead of everyone holidaying in July and August, a significant proportion would take their vacations in September to November when the potato harvest was in full swing.<sup>11</sup> As it happened, the very wet weather of that year proved extremely problematic, particularly with the potato harvest when low yields and wretched picking conditions prompted something approaching a crisis. Hardly surprisingly volunteers seemed less than enthusiastic at the prospect of a fortnight of backache under rain-sodden skies and ankle-deep in mud. J. K. Knowles, President of the National Farmers Union, maintained in August that an extra 70,000 volunteers would be required throughout England and Wales to gather the all-important potato crop and that hitherto a mere 20,000 had come forward, leading to what he described as a 'desperate' situation.<sup>12</sup> But all was not lost. In Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire school-children were granted extra leave (in addition to the statutory exemptions discussed below) to assist with potato picking.<sup>13</sup> In Yorkshire, several thousand liberated Russian prisoners bent their backs to the job, while in the east of England 35,000 German prisoners were made available after the War Office had carefully screened out the 'dangerous fanatics' among them.<sup>14</sup>

In the spring of 1945 farmers were being warned to expect little help from the armed forces in the forthcoming season and that despite their requests for a rapid demobilisation of agricultural workers, this source would provide the 'merest trickle' of labour. Moreover, as Womens Land Army membership declined, a sudden end to the war would more or less eliminate this element of the workforce, while the repatriation of thousands of Italian and German prisoners of war could be anticipated.<sup>15</sup> Once again the Ministry of Agriculture appealed for volunteers, in so doing impressing upon people that the war may have been drawing to a close, yet the urgency of the farm labour situation remained. By mid-June, however, a mere 50,000 volunteers had registered with the Ministry, of whom 38,000 were prepared to work between June and August leaving only a small residue for the autumn period.<sup>16</sup> Volunteer labour from this point was likely to prove insufficient and the National Farmers Union, supported by local education authorities keen to see the end of child labour in the fields, lobbied for the increased use of prisoners of war. Since El Alemein, four million Axis troops had been captured by British, American and other Allied forces, of whom 100,000 were immediately available in camps throughout Britain. Many thousands of Italians had already been repatriated by the allied military authorities, and camp commandants were instructed to collaborate with CWAECs to make immediate arrangements for the employment of all available German prisoners which, in the opinion of the Buckinghamshire branch of the National Farmers Union,

<sup>11</sup> FW, 10 Mar. 1944.

<sup>12</sup> FW, 25 Aug. 1944.

<sup>13</sup> FW, 3 Nov. 1944.

<sup>14</sup> FW, 8 Sept. 1944.

<sup>15</sup> FW, 9 Mar. 1945.

<sup>16</sup> FW, 22 June 1945.

was all to the good since a single German was worth 'a dozen Italians'.<sup>17</sup> The decision to maximize German labour led to one of many wartime inter-Departmental wrangles, in this case, over the issue of pay and hours of work. The Ministry of Agriculture was keen to see prisoners working the same hours as farmers and their regular workers, but the War Office, with some justification, was worried about the security implications of groups of potentially hostile men being away from their camps after sunset. Accordingly, they insisted that prisoners worked in the daylight for a maximum of 48 hours per week for which farmers would pay 1s. per hour, primarily to cover the cost of armed guards. Of this shilling, each prisoner would receive 4d.<sup>18</sup> Eventually a compromise was reached whereby the War Office permitted individual prisoners to undertake overtime with the consent of their camp commandant, in some cases allowing suitably vetted prisoners to work without guards.<sup>19</sup> The War Office was particularly insistent that farmers did not give prisoners any form of inducement, in cash or in kind, being convinced that this would provoke an ever-increasing spiral of bribes necessary to get the men to work at all. Indeed, after a case in Yorkshire when a farmer had been caught giving cigarettes and cigars to his prisoner-workers, the practice was formally declared illegal and defaulters faced the threat of the withdrawal of prisoners of war from their farms.<sup>20</sup>

The National Union of Agricultural Workers (NUAW) took a somewhat equivocal view of the employment of prisoners of war on the land. Aware of the national importance of securing sufficient labour for farming at appropriate seasons, they remained uneasy at what they saw as the threat of casualisation which might arise from the employment of German prisoners. Eventually, in 1945, they struck a compromise with the Ministry of Agriculture by which it was agreed that prison labour would be removed from any farm where it could be proved to have displaced indigenous workers, either on a regular or piece-work basis.<sup>21</sup> The NFU, keen to promote the establishment of a skilled workforce, and only too aware that many farm-workers resented being seen as on a par with foreigners with little experience of farm work, were supportive of the compromise and objected strongly to the declaration in 1946 that prisoner-workers would receive the minimum agricultural wage. As they continued to press for the rapid demobilisation of former farm staff, they looked forward to the day when prisoners were no longer key figures in the labour force.<sup>22</sup> Officialdom, though, saw things rather differently. To the Ministry of Agriculture in particular, the relative failure of the various armed services Farm Training Schemes – which aimed to attract demobilized soldiers to the land – and the continuing problem of recruitment to the WLA, meant that there remained a shortfall in labour supply. Some regular farm staff had returned to farms in 1946, but nevertheless Tom Williams estimated that an extra 100,000 workers would be required over the next few years even after the various emergency programmes were closed down.<sup>23</sup> The WLA and the

<sup>17</sup> *FW*, 13 July 1945. This opinion was shared by my father who employed Italian, Polish, Russian and German prisoners during the war. Three Germans, whose homes were in the Russian zone, remained on the farm until 1952, two of them returning to Britain to attend my father's funeral in 1994.

<sup>18</sup> *FW*, 13 July 1945.

<sup>19</sup> *FW*, 19 May 1945. This pleased farmers since they

no longer had to pay to feed the guard detail.

<sup>20</sup> *FW*, 10 Aug. 1945. In the event this rather silly restriction was withdrawn in 1946 after which farmers were permitted to give a free supply of cigarettes to 'deserving' prisoners.

<sup>21</sup> *FW*, 25 July 1945.

<sup>22</sup> *FW*, 8 Mar. 1946.

<sup>23</sup> *FW*, 3 May 1946.

volunteer harvest labour camps would continue to run for 'at least another year or two' while prisoners of war, European refugees and, in particular, the remnants of General Anders' Polish army (who were currently awaiting resettlement in Britain), would all take part in the food production effort.<sup>24</sup> By the mid-point of the potato harvest in 1946, some 890,000 people were engaged in potato picking, 70,000 of them volunteers, 30,000 WLA and a further 180,000 Polish and German personnel.<sup>25</sup> The fact that many of the latter would be repatriated within a matter of months raised the issue of how the next year's harvest would be gathered. Quite fortuitously, the government had learned from the Italian embassy early in 1946 that many repatriated Italians, faced with unemployment at home, were interested in returning to England '... to the farms where they were so happy'.<sup>26</sup> In the event, a small number returned to settle permanently in the United Kingdom. Other Italians meanwhile, yet to be repatriated, were invited to take part in a scheme under which they would temporarily forgo repatriation in favour of a twelve month contract allowing them to remain working on farms in the capacity of alien citizens. Needless to say this scheme was enthusiastically supported by the War Office, only too glad to cast off its responsibility for prisoners of war.<sup>27</sup> Despite the various retention schemes, repatriation was proceeding at the rate of 1500 men per week by January 1947 while WLA membership was shrinking by almost 400 women each month.<sup>28</sup> This being the case, the role of Italian returning prisoners (and those who had contracted to remain temporarily in England and Wales), Polish volunteers and displaced people from the British zones of Germany and Austria took on vital importance. Poles in particular, located at camps throughout Britain, were available to farmers who applied for their services through the local office of the Ministry of Labour. At the insistence of the NUAW, Poles (or, for that matter Germans who had chosen not to return to the Russian zone) could only be employed where there was no available British alternative, in which case they would enjoy the same pay and conditions as the former, subject to the restriction of informing the police of any change of address should they leave their original camp.<sup>29</sup>

The balance of payments crisis of the first post-war decade demanded that every effort be directed towards dollar-saving. The Atlee government launched its ambitious proposal for the agricultural industry to produce extra output to the value of £100,000,000 by 1951–2, in effect an increase of some fifty per cent over wartime levels. Inevitably this would impose heavy demands on labour and throughout 1947 and 1948 the government continued to advertise for volunteers, promoted the various schemes for retaining prisoners on a civilian basis, and made arrangements for farm workers in the armed services to have three weeks extra leave to help with essential harvest work.<sup>30</sup> Yet the prospects for 1948 remained bleak. By midsummer only 16,000 prisoners of war remained in the country, 11,000 or so of them either billeted on farms or located in 'pools' in hostels from which they were available (through the renamed County Agricultural Executive Committees) for daily hire to farmers. Notwithstanding the argument that the Agriculture Act of 1947 would bring stability to farming and in turn attract more

<sup>24</sup> FW, 11 Oct. 1946.

<sup>25</sup> FW, 6 Sept. 1946.

<sup>26</sup> FW, 31 May 1946.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> FW, 10 Jan. 1947.

<sup>29</sup> FW, 18 Apr. 1947.

<sup>30</sup> FW, 28 Mar. 1947; 23 June 1948.

workers to its service, the raising of the school leaving age in the same year effectively spelt the loss of some 18,000 new entrants to the industry. Thus the acute problem of labour supply remained, the situation being exacerbated by the poor summer weather and the heavy storms of the later months of the year. Ultimately it became a matter of 'muddling through' and the cereal and potato harvests were brought in by a miscellaneous workforce of regular labourers, displaced persons, former prisoners of war, urban volunteers, unemployed dockers, service personnel, Irish itinerant labourers, volunteers from Europe and the many schoolchildren whose role in wartime food production is considered in the remainder of this article.<sup>31</sup>

## II

During the early phases of the war a variety of unofficial and semi-official schemes for the engagement of schoolchildren and undergraduates in agricultural work had been discussed and locally implemented. It had long been the practice (towards which education authorities had tended to turn a blind eye) for country children to take time off school to help with root-crop hoeing, haymaking and potato-picking, and after war broke out this became almost an informal element in the curriculum of rural schools. Concurrently children were taken by their teachers into the woods and fields to collect plant material of medicinal value, and countless bundles of foxglove, coltsfoot, centuary and yarrow, along with barrels of rose-hips, were gathered by youthful hands as a contribution to the war effort.<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere, both public and secondary schools 'adopted' local farms, despatching groups of pupils to lend a hand at critical periods, or occupying their spare time in rat-catching at threshing time, plucking poultry and all manner of other necessary tasks.<sup>33</sup> Some schools contributed directly to food production by feeding a few pigs, cultivating spare ground on the school premises or, in the case of evacuees relocated at Market Rasen in Lincolnshire, establishing their own bee-keeping company.<sup>34</sup> Evacuees, in fact, played a vital role in wartime farming and various means were devised to provide teenage evacuees with basic training in agricultural practices. Typical of these was the Foster Parents Plan for War Children. Established with financial backing from the United States and located at Ashley House School near Worksop, the idea was for children from bombed-out urban homes to continue with their general education while simultaneously being trained on carefully-selected farms under the watchful eye of the local CWAEC.<sup>35</sup> Another project, involving both evacuees and country children, was devised by S. J. Wright, Director of the Oxford Institute for Research in Agricultural Engineering, and directed towards ensuring that the 100,000 tractors available for farm work in 1941 were used to full capacity. Under this arrangement, some two hundred Oxford undergraduates were instructed in the basics of tractor driving and mechanics before being despatched to schools and passing on their skills to older schoolchildren. In this way almost 4000 boys were enabled to be seconded to farms at appropriate times thereby to allow regular tractor drivers to attend to other essential tasks.<sup>36</sup>

Early in 1941 in what on the face of it seemed to be an uncontroversial measure, the Board

<sup>31</sup> FW, 8 Oct., 22 Oct. 1948; 28 Apr. 1950.

<sup>32</sup> Armstrong, *Farm workers*, p. 211.

<sup>33</sup> *The Times*, 2 Mar. 1940.

<sup>34</sup> FW, 7 Mar. 1941.

<sup>35</sup> FW, 18 July 1941.

<sup>36</sup> FW, 4 July 1941.

of Education instructed local education authorities (LEA) to fix school holidays to coincide with times when seasonal demand for farm labour was at its peak.<sup>37</sup> Most LEAs found no difficulty with this arrangement as, for example, in Leicestershire where the summer vacation was curtailed so as to facilitate a three week holiday in October when children could help with the potato harvest.<sup>38</sup> Problems, however, arose when the Ministry of Labour proposed the idea of children working on farms *during* term time. This was not only illegal under the terms of the Education Act and the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act, but met with the fierce opposition of the Board of Education where it was held that absences from school would be damaging to children's education. The National Union of Teachers, The National Association of Headteachers and the National Union of Women Teachers concurred, declaring that whatever safeguards were put in place, education would suffer.<sup>39</sup> The NUAW went even further, opposing not only term-time work but even holiday-based farm work. Holidays, after all, were times for children to play and not to labour. While the Union admitted that the Ministry of Labour's proposal contained no element of compulsion and that under no circumstances would children be *forced* to work on farms during school time, they nonetheless claimed that pressure might be applied to parents to sanction their child's term-time labour.<sup>40</sup> Edwin Gooch, the NUAW President, stridently described the proposal as 'a pernicious form of class legislation', inaccurately claiming that it would only apply to working class children in urban schools. His claim prompted an avalanche of correspondence in *The Times*, the gist being that not only were many public schools sending their children to work on farms but that far from being a stressful and uncongenial task for children, '... farming is as pleasant from the average child's point of view as it is important from the nation's'.<sup>41</sup> Yet the Board of Education and Ernest Bevin's Ministry of Labour continued to be bombarded with letters, memoranda and resolutions from the farm workers union, the Workers Education Association and other groups representative of organized labour.<sup>42</sup> Bevin confronted the NUAW in March 1941, emphasized the lack of compulsion in the proposals, stressed that there would be no ill-effects on schooling and (perhaps ignorant of or indifferent to the miseries of potato picking) argued that children would gain 'enjoyment and health' from farm labour.<sup>43</sup> Apart from possible effects on the economic status of the workers themselves, the NUAW's principal worry was that of child exploitation. However much the prominent journalist and polemicist A. G. Street might deny that farmers would ever exploit children to the detriment of their health, the Union was not so sure.<sup>44</sup> Children might welcome the extra money brought in by their exertions they argued, yet farmers could nevertheless prove hard taskmasters who were likely to seek every opportunity to overwork this cheap and non-unionized source of labour. Teachers also tended to share this view, and while many came to understand the imperative for children to work the land, they utterly

<sup>37</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 369, 1940–1, 6 Mar. 1941.

<sup>38</sup> Armstrong, *Farm workers*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>39</sup> *The Times*, 14 Apr. 1941; *FW* 25 Apr., 1 May 1941.

<sup>40</sup> *The Times*, 31 Jan. 1942.

<sup>41</sup> *The Times*, 16 June 1942. For Gooch's relationship with the NFU see Alun Howkins, *The death of rural England. The social history of the countryside since 1900*

(2003), pp. 84–5. In this excellent work Howkins devotes a complete chapter to agriculture during World War II with particular respect to labour, labour relations and wage levels.

<sup>42</sup> PRO, ED 11/230.

<sup>43</sup> PRO, MAF 47/7 (42).

<sup>44</sup> A. G. Street, *Hitler's Whistle* (1943), p. 263.

condemned exploitation where it was shown to have occurred. A Durham headmaster told the 1950 conference of the National Association of Headteachers that during the previous year he had been confronted by an irate farmer complaining that eight boys working on his farm had gone on strike – merely because they had been given no time to rest during the day! This lack of compassion and understanding did little to endear the generality of farmers to teachers and the Board of Education.<sup>45</sup> Exploitation aside, teachers believed that once they had worked on farms away from the strict discipline of school, children would become difficult to handle; their sense of values challenged, their sense of duty eroded and the world turned upside-down. Indeed, ‘... for a child of twelve to earn 35s. or £2 per week is a dangerous experiment, leading not only to false values but to something approaching truculence among some children on their return to school’.<sup>46</sup>

Bombarded on all sides by letters of objection from Labour party and union branches throughout the land, Bevin and Minister of Agriculture R. S. Hudson were united in their determination that schoolchildren should work the land in term-time in the interests of the nation as a whole. Against the opposition of the Board of Education, irritated by those numerous local authorities and justices of the peace already flouting the legal requirements of school attendance, Bevin and Hudson lobbied the War Cabinet.<sup>47</sup> The outcome was the legitimisation of children’s term-time labour under the terms of a Defence Regulation, confirmed by an Order in Council on 5 May 1942.<sup>48</sup> Drafted, somewhat ironically, under the direction of R. A. Butler, President of the Board of Education, the Order permitted children to be away from school doing farm work for a maximum of twenty half-days each year, and stipulated that under all circumstances their safety and health be safeguarded.<sup>49</sup> The *voluntary principle* was the key theme of the Order which also set out clear guidelines as to the need to seek permission from *either* the child’s father, a close relative *or*, in the case of an evacuee, a billeting householder, before he or she were exempted from school for farm work. Essentially the ‘school-release’ scheme would be operated by the CWAECs who would liaise closely with the Board of Education to prevent exploitation, would ensure that no child worked in excess of four hours daily, would guarantee that children receive the minimum agricultural wage for their efforts, and would offer assurances that no child under fourteen would be employed until all other sources of labour had been exhausted.<sup>50</sup> In the face of objection from the unions and the rather grudging cooperation of the Board of Education, the scheme worked with remarkable success throughout the war years and beyond. Without the term-time release of children it is doubtful whether the one million acres of potatoes grown annually between 1941 and 1944 would have

<sup>45</sup> *FW*, 2 June 1950. For other boys it was tremendous fun. Mr Ian Crisp of Letchworth spent as much time as possible at a whole range of farm tasks in his summer vacations during the war. He also took part in the ‘school-release’ scheme. Boys would assemble in the market square in Hitchin to be taken out by the CWAEC to various local farms for potato picking. This was the highlight of the week, especially when transport comprised six-wheeled canvas-topped Army lorries lent by the local US Air Base (information from Mr Ian Crisp,

27 July 2003).

<sup>46</sup> *The Times*, 15 June 1943.

<sup>47</sup> PRO, ED 11/230.

<sup>48</sup> Ministry of Education Circular 1388; *Order in Council Defence Regulations 1939*.

<sup>49</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 379, 1941–2, 7 May 1942.

<sup>50</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 381, 1941–2, 5 June 1942.

been planted, let alone harvested. Pressure on schoolchildren was reduced by 1944 as prisoners of war became increasingly available. By 1947, however, (when the school leaving age was raised to fifteen), the education authorities announced ‘with the greatest reluctance’ that children would once again be required in large numbers for farm work and for the next three years the scheme was resuscitated, only to be discontinued in 1950.<sup>51</sup>

### III

As early as the closing months of 1939 the Headmasters Conference, if not the National Association of Headteachers, had come to sense the necessity of making full use of schoolboy work power. Several public schools were already involving their boys in harvest camps under the motivating influence of Canon Spencer Leeson, Headmaster of Winchester, Chairman of the Headmasters Conference and personal friend of R. S. Hudson.<sup>52</sup> By the summer of 1940, indeed, no less than 249 camps for 8000 boys had been successfully operated both by public and secondary schools to the approval of collaborating farmers.<sup>53</sup> The Board of Education, responding to a report by its Senior Chief Inspector of Schools, expressed some reservations over the rather *ad hoc* organisation of camps, the lacklustre enthusiasm of CWAECs, and the hesitancy of *some* farmers to employ schoolboys whom they doubted were up to the physical demands of harvest work.<sup>54</sup> This apart, there was the problem of finance. Boys were expected to meet the cost of travel to a particular harvest camp and to contribute to their keep (some 11s. weekly), and with wage levels of between 6d. and 8d. per hour many were unable to earn sufficient to yield a surplus at the end of the two or three weeks. This, of course, would be a serious disincentive to children from poorer family backgrounds.<sup>55</sup> Of even greater importance, as far as some headmasters were concerned, was the issue of insurance and of the supervision of children both at the camps and on the farms where they travelled to work. The potential danger had been highlighted in 1940 when a boy from Warwick School harvest camp lost an eye after being struck with a clod of earth thrown by one of his fellows. In the ensuing legal action the headmaster of the school was deemed at fault for not ensuring adequate supervision and was personally obliged to pay damages and legal costs. Not surprisingly, headmasters and other teachers were seriously bothered, and many were unwilling to organize camps unless a formal structure embodying indemnification against legal action could be elaborated.<sup>56</sup> From the Ministry of Agriculture’s perspective, schoolboy harvest camps were likely to be a key feature of the wartime food production campaign and, as 1941 progressed, a series of Departmental Committees discussed means whereby the scheme could be established on a formal basis and organized in such a way that the supply of schoolboy labour could be matched to local demand.<sup>57</sup> To resolve these issues the Ministry established the Schoolboy Harvest Camps Advisory Committee (SHCAC) under the Chairmanship of Robert Hyde, Director of the Industrial Welfare Society.<sup>58</sup> Accepting his post ‘with some diffidence’, Hyde assembled a group

<sup>51</sup> *The Times*, 7 Mar., 12 Dec. 1947; 21 Apr. 1950.

<sup>52</sup> PRO, MAF 47/6 (204).

<sup>53</sup> *The Times*, 27 Mar. 1942.

<sup>54</sup> PRO, MAF 169/25.

<sup>55</sup> *The Times*, 6 Sept. 1941.

<sup>56</sup> PRO, MAF 47/7 (34).

<sup>57</sup> PRO, MAF 47/105 (42).

<sup>58</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 377, 1941–2, 22 Jan. 1942.

of representatives of the Board of Education, the Ministry of Agriculture, the CWAECs and the Headmasters and, in anticipation of the development of schoolgirl harvest camps, a member of the Association of Headmistresses in the shape of Miss M. F. Adams of Croydon High School.<sup>59</sup> The National Union of Agricultural Workers lobbied heavily for representation only to be rather sniffily rebuffed by Hudson who informed them that, since the Committee was concerned with organisational rather than policy issues, their involvement would be 'wasting their time'.<sup>60</sup>

The SHCAC's principal duty was to advise the Minister on all issues pertaining to harvest camps. At the same time it functioned as a liaison body, maintaining contact between CWAECs and schools, issuing detailed practical guidance on the running of camps and engaging with organisational and administrative problems as and when they occurred. Hyde and his colleagues were firmly of the view that the harvest camping experience would offer tangible social and cultural benefits far beyond the economic value to the nation of the boys' work. When he reviewed a decade of camping in 1951, Hyde (now Sir Robert) emphasized the educational advantages for urban children to be gained from learning about country life, and pointed out the many friendships developing between campers (many of whom were evacuees) and village residents.<sup>61</sup> As the Ministry of Agriculture's correspondents repeatedly urged, the camps had effectively re-established the link between town and country which had been eroded during the inter-war years.<sup>62</sup> The Headmaster of Harrow, meanwhile, persuaded by the Ministry of Information to broadcast on the Home Service, noted (apparently without irony) the great virtues of the admixture of 'some industrial boys' with public school boys at harvest camps '... to their mutual advantage'.<sup>63</sup> Again, pupils of Winchester College, not generally expected to labour for a crust, found it 'a revelation' that five or six hours hard work in the harvest fields barely earned them their keep.<sup>64</sup> For many boys and young men of all backgrounds there were a variety of simple lessons to be learned. The necessity of eating plain food without complaint, of enduring the lack of privacy and minor discomforts of camp life, and the importance of understanding that communal success depended on mutual unselfishness and the consideration of others, were valuable learning experiences. Besides, proposed an enthusiastic headmaster of evangelical persuasion, the harvest camp enterprise taught the basic Christian truth that service to others was effectively the service of God.<sup>65</sup>

Whether or not these various values were successfully inculcated depended in large measure on the quality of organisation of the camp. Well-organized and efficiently-conducted camps were popular with boys both at the time and in retrospect. Pupils from Westminster School (evacuated to Saltmarke Castle in Herefordshire) (Figure 1), Malvern College lads under canvas near Evesham, or Dulwich College boys encamped under the auspices of the Hampshire WAEC near Stockbridge in 1941, variously applauded the enthusiasm of the teachers and their wives who shouldered domestic tasks at the camps, usually without reward.<sup>66</sup> Both body and

<sup>59</sup> PRO, MAF 47/109.

<sup>60</sup> PRO, MAF 105/45 (68).

<sup>61</sup> R. Hyde, 'School harvest camps', *Agriculture* 58 (1951), p. 470.

<sup>62</sup> PRO, MAF 47/105.

<sup>63</sup> Ts of broadcast, 15 May 1941, PRO, MAF 47/7 (3).

<sup>64</sup> PRO, MAF 47/6 (200).

<sup>65</sup> W. Johnson, 'School harvest camps', *J. Ministry of Agriculture* 52 (1945), p. 18.

<sup>66</sup> FW, 10 June 1941.



FIGURE 1. 'Boys from Westminster School taking tea in a Herefordshire harvest field'.  
(photo courtesy of Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading, PFW PH2/W13/26)

soul required refreshment, and if some campers had to be content with the ministrations of the local vicar on a Sunday morning, camps in Wiltshire in 1942 and 1943 enjoyed regular visits – for the purpose of conducting services – from no less a personage than the Bishop of Salisbury himself.<sup>67</sup> In the eyes of many, a good index of efficiency was the financial surplus remaining for the children when the camp was finally wound up. For a surplus to be earned, not only did the Labour Officers of CWAECs need to be on their mettle to ensure regular work for campers, but farmers needed to show generosity and open-handedness, besides being patient with the foibles of the urban schoolboy.<sup>68</sup> Chrichton Porteous, Labour Officer for Lancashire and a member of the SHCAC, was himself responsible for placing 12,300 boys in harvest camps between 1940 and 1943. He frequently exhorted farmers to generosity, imploring them to offer praise where it was due and to realize, in particular, that camps were run with the simple and sole objective of helping with the task of growing food for the nation.<sup>69</sup> In urging them to help where possible with the pitching and striking of camps, Porteous tried to impress upon farmers that beyond the inevitable office work, there were awesome logistical difficulties in camp organisation. In Lancashire alone he had had to deal with 50 marquees, 470 tents, 55 stoves, 47 boilers, 400 kettles, 2800 groundsheets, 2300 palliases (to be stuffed with straw), 6200 blankets,

<sup>67</sup> *FW*, 11 Sept. 1942.

<sup>68</sup> *The Times*, 29 June 1943.

<sup>69</sup> *FW*, 10 Sept. 1943.

160 camp beds, 120 latrine screens, 228 buckets, 85 food bins, 90 storm lamps and 90 trestle tables for the summer camps of 1942. Simply acquiring this equipment was difficult enough, but after each camp everything required cleaning and disinfecting, and then to be shifted around the county four times each season as camps moved from early potato crops to pea-picking districts and thence to grain harvest locations and in the autumn to main crop potato areas.<sup>70</sup>

With or without the help of the SHCAC or the Board of Education's 24 page circular of guidance, the organisation of a harvest camp was a daunting task. To begin with it was essential to all and sundry to understand that the camp did not offer an opportunity for parents to hive off children for a cheap holiday; but rather to give those children a chance to contribute to the national interest through what was essentially a community project. This apart, sites had to be chosen (in liaison with local sanitary authorities, the CWAEC and the Medical Officer of Health), insurance cover secured, transport arranged, equipment hired or borrowed, and arrangements for work made with the local CWAEC. In the majority of cases boys were accommodated in suitably-camouflaged tents, although some headmasters took the view that a tent was a less than ideal place for a child to sleep after a hard day's work and they went to some trouble to secure barns, huts and other structures where these could be hired relatively cheaply.<sup>71</sup> Considerations of comfort apart, solid buildings offered more protection from hostile aerial attack, and CWAECs persuaded many local authorities to sanction the use of school buildings as dormitories where the proximity of a camp site allowed.<sup>72</sup> Attack from the air, in fact, was a major worry and CWAECs took care to make sure that schools camped in the safest possible locations. In the spring of 1944 when the Luftwaffe began to drop anti-personnel bombs designed to explode when touched or disturbed, CWAECs received a secret memorandum reminding them of the paramount importance of children's safety, and instructing them not to permit camps in the vicinity of areas where anti-personnel devices were known to have been dropped.<sup>73</sup> It was generally agreed that the optimum size of a harvest camp was 25–30 boys, requiring the presence of two masters, two cooks and (where boys themselves did not undertake them on a rota basis) up to three camp orderlies to attend to routine domestic tasks.<sup>74</sup> Thirty boys needed a great deal of equipment, which the SHCAC listed and enumerated in meticulous detail. Some schools with a camping tradition had their own sets of tents, paliasses, portable latrines and other paraphernalia, and where these were used the Ministry of Agriculture paid a *pro rata* sum for depreciation. In other cases kit would be borrowed from the CWAEC who indented from the Ministry of Labour at an agreed scale of hire charges.<sup>75</sup>

In 1940, when most school harvest camp schemes got underway, it was presumed that they

<sup>70</sup> FW, 31 July 1942.

<sup>71</sup> PRO, MAF 47/105 (13).

<sup>72</sup> PRO, MAF 169/24. At Bolton School Agricultural Camp in 1941 and 1942, boys slept eight to a bell tent, using a wooden shippon on the farm as a mess hall ([www.boys.boltonsch.uk](http://www.boys.boltonsch.uk)). Boys from an inner London school, camping at Charlecote, near Stratford upon Avon, slept in tents near the local school playground and breakfasted and dined in the school classroom

(information from Mr Gerald Pendry, 28 July 2003).

<sup>73</sup> PRO, MAF 47/9.

<sup>74</sup> While economies of scale meant that bigger camps were cheaper to run, organisers were confronted with the problem of persuading farmers to offer work to large numbers of boys when bad weather intervened at harvest time.

<sup>75</sup> Memorandum, Mar. 1942; PRO, MAF 47/8.

would be self-financing. Thus the costs of food, fuel, domestic helpers, insurance premiums, cleaning materials and laundry would be offset by wages earned by the children. The latter, recorded on carefully-maintained timesheets provided by the CWAEC, would be pooled and divided between the camp participants when all costs had been met. But experience was soon to prove that when bad weather intervened and farmers were unable or unwilling to offer alternatives to harvest work, camps failed to yield a surplus and either the school or parents were faced with covering the deficit. This problem could be circumvented in some measure when an enterprising and diplomatic master-in-charge maintained daily contact with farmer clients to ensure continuity of work regardless of the weather. This was the case in the summer of 1940 when boys from Regents Park School attended a harvest camp in Hampshire where they worked for thirty hours per week, covered the cost of the camp, enjoyed the experience and went home each with a well-deserved nest egg.<sup>76</sup> Repeated losses, on the other hand, would be a deterrent to further effort, and the Ministry of Agriculture approached the Treasury to seek funds for some sort of guarantee against loss, at the same time lobbying for the right to hire camping equipment free of charge from the Office of Works.<sup>77</sup> Content to concede the second request, the Treasury pondered long and hard before grudgingly agreeing that where a CWAEC could vouch for a camp being well-conducted and organized, a maximum of £9000 could be made annually available to meet up to 50 per cent of camp costs ‘... where assistance is asked for’.<sup>78</sup> In the event, as the number of camps proliferated, £9000 proved woefully inadequate and in 1942 the Treasury was persuaded to allocate a block grant to allow CWAECs to guarantee a weekly minimum of thirty hours’ work for each boy attending a camp. By this means boys denied the chance of harvest work by the weather would receive payment for the equivalent of 30 hours weekly at rates laid down by the local County Agricultural Wages Board. Total Treasury expenditure on schoolboy harvest camps peaked at £56,000 in 1944, declining to £50,000 the following year, £19,000 in 1947 and £10,000 in 1949.<sup>79</sup> Of these sums, payments under the ‘guarantee of work’ accounted for 35 per cent, car allowances, domestic help and equipment hire 30 per cent, and subsidized transport costs a further 35 per cent. The latter involved the full cost of masters’ travel to and from the camp, an allowance of 7s. 6d. for boys’ return rail travel or, where they cycled to the camp, an allowance of 1s. weekly for depreciation together with ½d. per mile running cost. Bicycles were reckoned an essential item of camp equipment since farmers were not *obliged* to transport boys from camp to work site, buses were in short

<sup>76</sup> *The Times*, 1 Sept. 1940. The late Mr G. Hinchliffe taught for many years at Roundhay School in Leeds and, in a memoir made available to me by the good offices of his son Prof. J. R. Hinchliffe, he testifies to the enthusiasm of the children working at the eight harvest camps which he organised in the war and early post-war years. Located on a farm owned by the Chairman of the local CWAEC, campers were rarely short of work since local farmers, anxious to retain their services, ensured that jobs were available around the farmyard when inclement weather prevented harvesting. In 1943 boys from Roundhay worked a total of 9000 hours, often beginning

their day with breakfast served in darkness while the eastern sky was dotted with bombers returning to Dishforth aerodrome after their missions. In 1948, when most prisoners of war had been repatriated, each boy-harvester worked more than 40 hours weekly, the working day often extending so far into the evening that meals would be taken at 10.30pm after which boys washed in bowls of hot water from the cookhouse before tumbling exhausted into bed.

<sup>77</sup> PRO, MAF 47/7 (3).

<sup>78</sup> PRO, MAF 47/7 (4).

<sup>79</sup> PRO, MAF 47/9, 47/10, 47/142.

supply due to military requisitioning, and CWAECs found difficulty in securing petrol coupons in sufficient quantity to run vehicles beyond a strictly limited mileage.

With some reluctance the Treasury agreed that girls' harvest camps would be eligible for monies from the block grant. Advised by the SHCAC that female modesty would demand extra latrine screens and more sick-bay space since, as a lady member of the Committee put it, '... casual illness is much more likely in girls in our experience', the Treasury remained doubtful as to the appropriateness of girls' camps.<sup>80</sup> Nor, indeed, did the CWAECs or the SHCAC go out of their way to encourage schoolgirl participation on the rather dubious grounds that since they were physically incapable of the heavier farm tasks, their usefulness would be confined to districts where lighter work such as fruit picking and pea harvesting was available. As a matter of policy it was left to local CWAECs to determine whether or not girls' camps were promoted, although it is clear that where such camps were established the girls discharged their duties every bit as effectively as their male counterparts.<sup>81</sup> Girls or boys, harvesters were expected to carry with them formidable amounts of personal equipment as they travelled to their camps. When the lads of High Storrs Grammar School in Sheffield set off on their bikes to camp in Lincolnshire in the summers of 1942 and 1943, they took along not only clothes and toilet requisites for three weeks, but sheets, cutlery and, in particular, their football boots which they were expected to use for farm work.<sup>82</sup> The matter of footwear worried both teachers and administrators. Many urban children had no suitable working boots, and even if they had the necessary clothing coupons, poorer parents lacked the wherewithal to buy boots of sufficient quality. For all the efforts of CWAECs to assemble pools of clogs, it seemed that children's work output was likely to be limited where they were inadequately shod.<sup>83</sup> When Lord Cromwell, a prominent member of Leicestershire WAEAC, visited the various harvest camps in the county in 1945, he was alarmed both at the condition of children's clothing and the fact that many lacked a decent pair of boots. Writing to Tom Williams the following March he suggested that the Minister might have a quiet word with Sir Stafford Cripps at the Board of Trade ('... to whom I am related by marriage') with the object of persuading him that school harvest volunteers should receive extra clothing coupons. Cripps, it appears, listened sympathetically only to conclude that since the children worked merely for short periods, extra coupons would not only be inappropriate, but their issue would prompt demands from regular farm workers.<sup>84</sup>

Providing growing boys from urban homes with working clothes was one thing; satisfying their hunger after a day's labour in the open air quite another. In the early phases camps had relied largely upon the goodwill of teachers' wives, the local Girl Guides, the WVS, or the long-suffering school cook. But as time went by it became clear that unpaid volunteers would not come forward in sufficient numbers to cater for the increasing volume of school camps, and in 1943 the SHCAC encouraged the Board of Education to approach domestic science colleges

<sup>80</sup> PRO, MAF 47/109.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> S. Ward, *War in the Countryside* (1988), pp. 50–1.

<sup>83</sup> PRO, MAF 47/121.

<sup>84</sup> PRO, MAF 47/148. The issue of working boots became something of a *cause célèbre* during the war.

This was particularly so when regular farm workers learned that prisoners of war working on farms were *provided* with rubber boots by the War Office whereas they, the farm workers, had to save footwear coupons to secure suitable boots. The WLA complained similarly.

with the view of recruiting suitably trained students as camp cooks. Attracted by the incentive of free board and lodging and a cash payment of 30s. weekly, students volunteered in considerable numbers. Given the exacting nature of their work, the SHCAC took the view that rather than having to 'rough it' under canvas, student cooks should be billeted in local houses, for which CWAECs agreed to cover costs up to a maximum of 15s. weekly.<sup>85</sup> From these comfortable billets student cooks sallied forth each day to confront the challenging exercise of meeting the appetites of campers against the restrictions of strict wartime rationing. Guided by such edifying publications as the Ministry of Food's *Carried Meals and Snacks* and *Practical Canteen Cooking*, or the Board of Education's *Catering for Harvest Camps*, they strove to make the best use of increasingly limited resources.<sup>86</sup> These and kindred leaflets, memoranda and guidebooks reveal the bleakness of the food supply situation and the challenges open to an enterprising and creative cook. *Catering for Harvest Camps* offered daily menus, information about food storage and cooking routines, guidance on bulk purchase, details of the nutritional requirements of growing boys and girls and stern instructions as to the proper thickness of bread for sandwiches. But despite the seeming monotony of dietary ingredients, with much reference to dried egg, tinned salmon, cheese pasties and date and cabbage sandwiches, a surprising range of meals were on offer including the superficially unedifying 'Patriotic Pudding', a concoction of grated potato, flour, lard, dried egg, baking powder and syrup.<sup>87</sup> In 1941 the Ministry of Food produced a leaflet, *Catering Arrangements for Schoolboy Harvest Camps*, perhaps the very exemplar of dietary austerity. As a basic diet children were allowed 8oz of cheese, 2lbs of canned meat, 1lb of canned beans, ½lb of biscuits and 2oz of dried fruit weekly together with rice 'as required' and unspecified amounts of New Zealand honey. Camp organizers and cooks were encouraged to lay up local supplies of fruit, vegetables and rabbits and to liaise with the Regional Milk Marketing Officer so as to obtain sufficient milk. The Ministry of Food was convinced that plentiful amounts of unrationed food was available where camp organizers '... show reasonable initiative'.<sup>88</sup> All well and good, but the success or otherwise of such initiative depended on the goodwill of local Ministry officials of whose intransigence and lack of sympathy there were frequent complaints.<sup>89</sup> In 1944, to the irritation of the SHCAC, the Ministry of Food reduced the already miserly meat allowance. By marginally increasing the ration of cheese and dried eggs some compensation was offered and the ingenuity of camp cooks further taxed as they confronted the daily task of supplying two hot meals and a packed lunch against a strict budget. Their job would be made the easier where local farmers and growers offered staples like potatoes and vegetables either at discounted rates or even free of charge. This, of course, was largely a matter of luck. For every letter to the Ministry of Agriculture

<sup>85</sup> PRO, MAF 47/9.

<sup>86</sup> The Board of Education issued a variety of publications offering practical advice as to how schools could contribute to wartime food needs. *Schools and Food Production* (Memo 1) discusses the cultivation of derelict land and abandoned allotments; *Harvest in the Woodlands* (Memo 5) emphasises the value of collecting acorns and beechmast as pig feed; *Collection of leaves and roots of common plants* (Memo 25) reveals

the pharmaceutical use of a range of collectable vegetation, while other *Memoranda* cover poultry, pig and rabbit keeping together with details of work to be carried out in the school garden at various seasons of the year (PRO, ED 138/27).

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> PRO, MAF 47/9.

<sup>89</sup> PRO, MAF 47/146.

complaining of the tight-fistedness of farmers and their unwillingness to provide milk and vegetables at other than retail prices, there were others reflecting more satisfactory experiences. The boys from High Storrs Grammar School in Sheffield certainly had few complaints. Thanks to the resourcefulness of the school cook who lodged in a nearby village, they were properly fed and watered, their daily diet being enhanced by ample supplies of cakes, custards and bakewell tarts sent to the fields by the farmer's wife together with '... canful upon canful of lovely, sweet, strong, milky tea'.<sup>90</sup>

This sort of generosity would be doubly welcome by children who had been woken at 7.00 am, had their kit inspected and finished communal prayers by 7.55, breakfasted at 8.00 and cycled to the farm at 8.30 to work a full eight hour day. While the detailed regime varied between camps, in most cases campers returned to their site by 5.00 pm and after eating and enjoying a period of recreation, lights were extinguished between 9 and 10 pm. The strict regimentation of camp life, with its rigorously enforced rules and regulations, may have come naturally to the majority of public school boys, but it probably seemed a little strange and irksome to lads from inner-city state schools. To any boy or girl, however, the prospect of money in the pocket was both a potent spur to effort and a compensation for having to put up with two or three weeks of regimented living. Irrespective of whether they were engaged with the relatively pleasant business of corn harvesting or the autumnal fatigue of potato picking (Figure 2), in 1941 sixteen year olds were paid at 8*d.* per hour and younger children 6*d.* These levels of pay, the Ministry of Agriculture insisted, were the *absolute minima* and where conditions dictated, not only were camp organizers within their rights to demand higher hourly rates, but farmers duty bound to pay them.<sup>91</sup> The same applied in 1946 when the hourly rate for all boys and girls from 14–19 was increased to 9*d.* to reflect increasing camp costs, by this time running at 26*s.* per person per week.<sup>92</sup>

On New Year's Day 1946, Tom Williams, by now Minister of Agriculture, wrote to Ellen Wilkinson, his opposite number in the recently-established Ministry of Education, urging inter-departmental collaboration in his effort to retain school harvest camps 'on the greatest possible scale' in the early post-war years.<sup>93</sup> Aware that after six years of war many schools were beginning to tire of the annual harvest camp, that parental enthusiasm was waning with the passing of the immediate wartime urgency, and that teachers themselves were by now less willing to sacrifice their vacations, Williams knew that this was likely to prove an uphill struggle.<sup>94</sup> Under the terms of the 1944 Education Act, LEAs had been empowered to fix the timing and duration of school holidays on a local basis and whereas they had been asked to consider farm labour needs in their deliberations, they were under no legal obligation to do so. Some authorities were more cooperative in this respect than others. The Lincolnshire CWAEC, for example, persuaded the local LEA to extend the duration of the summer holidays of all schools involved

<sup>90</sup> Ward, *War in the countryside*. Pupils from Bolton School, camping at Mowbreck Hall Farm near Kirkham, in Lancashire, in 1941–2 received a hot midday meal from their farmer-employers. They enjoyed excellent relations with the farmers and each camp returned a

satisfactory profit ([www.boys.boltonschuk](http://www.boys.boltonschuk)).

<sup>91</sup> PRO, MAF 47/8; memorandum, 1941.

<sup>92</sup> PRO, MAF 47/146; memorandum, 1946.

<sup>93</sup> PRO, MAF 47/146.

<sup>94</sup> PRO, MAF 47/10.



FIGURE 2. 'London schoolboys gathering the potato harvest on Hampstead Heath'.  
(photo courtesy of Museum of English Rural life, University of Reading, PFW PH2/W13/10)

with harvest camps, while in Northumberland the length of holidays had been so curtailed that all harvest camps had been discontinued by 1946.<sup>95</sup> Teachers who had previously given up three weeks or more of their holidays were angered both by the lack of official recognition of their efforts and by what appeared to them to be a cynical reduction in their summer vacation time. Williams' solution was to propose that LEAs be granted the discretion to offer time off *in lieu* where teachers had been involved in harvest camp organisation. But it was not enough and, as Table 3 shows, harvest camp numbers declined steeply after 1947.

The SHCAC, convinced of the broader educational benefits of the harvest camp scheme, discussed at length the feasibility of continuing it in the post-war decades as a form of youth service.<sup>96</sup> If run along the lines of agricultural/educational/holiday ventures, they argued, summer camps could become innovative learning experiences while simultaneously fostering interest in the countryside. Their enthusiasm, though, was not matched by that of officials in the Ministry of Education, uneasy about overburdening their hard-pressed teachers. Whilst prepared to listen to 'constructive proposals', the Ministry remained unconvinced as to the

<sup>95</sup> PRO, MAF 47/146.

<sup>96</sup> PRO, MAF 47/142.

TABLE 3. The School Harvest Camps Scheme, 1941–1950

|                                   | 1941   | 1942    | 1943    | 1944    | 1945    | 1946   | 1947   | 1948   | 1949   | 1950   |
|-----------------------------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| No. of Camps                      | 335    | 654     | 1068    | 997     | 774     | 450    | 308    | 298    | 171    | 112    |
| No. of boys in single sex camps   | 12,000 | 26,425  | 41,372  | 45,968  | 28,130  | 13,250 | 9960   | 7500   | 5191   | 3538   |
| No. of girls in single sex camps  | –      | 3869    | 20,424  | 15,593  | 12,130  | 4840   | 2530   | 2400   | 566    | 294    |
| No. girls and boys in mixed camps | –      | 848     | 6892    | 5679    | 4320    | 2960   | 1110   | 900    | 466    | 271    |
| Total                             | 12,000 | 31,142  | 68,688  | 67,240  | 44,580  | 21,050 | 13,600 | 10,800 | 6223   | 4103   |
| Total Boy/Girl weeks of work      |        | 124,568 | 274,752 | 268,860 | 178,320 | 63,150 | 36,044 | 32,214 | 19,695 | 12,803 |

Source: PRO, MAF 105/45 (214).

educational value of dual or triple-purpose camps and the idea withered on the vine.<sup>97</sup> By the autumn of 1950 it was clear that the SHCAC had outlived its usefulness and Tom Williams attended the final meeting on 15 November of that year.<sup>98</sup> In providing guidance and direction to schools and performing a vital liaison role, the Committee had been a major player in a scheme contributing in the order of one million weeks of labour to the wartime farms of Britain.

#### IV

Farmers, the beneficiaries of this youthful workforce, were unstinting in their praise, sometimes favourably comparing the children's efforts with those of adult volunteers – '... crowds of casual holiday-makers' – who sometimes did more damage than work.<sup>99</sup> So delighted were growers in the Fylde district of Lancashire (where children from twenty schools picked 2000 tons of potatoes in 1943) that they provided camp participants with illuminated scrolls as expressions of gratitude.<sup>100</sup> Others received cash bonuses, as in the case of boys from St Clement Dane's Grammar School, Holborn who camped beside the River Windrush at Standlake, Oxfordshire for the harvest of 1941. Besides paying each boy a bonus, numerous local farmers wrote at length to the Labour Officer of the CWAEC expressing their appreciation and urging that the camp be repeated in subsequent years.<sup>101</sup> 'They are willing to tackle anything', wrote an enthusiastic farmer who had employed thirty boys more or less continuously from July to September. Nothing was too much for them, be it pea-picking, singling turnips, cabbage planting, soft fruit picking, haymaking, corn harvesting, thistling, stone picking or road mending.<sup>102</sup>

Although the sources are virtually silent on the issue, the very fact that over 20,000 girls

<sup>97</sup> PRO MAF 47/143.

<sup>98</sup> PRO, MAF 105/45 (215)

<sup>99</sup> C. A. Richards and W. S. Flack, 'Farming camp school', *J. Ministry of Agriculture* 52 (1945), p. 79.

<sup>100</sup> FW, 28 Jan. 1944.

<sup>101</sup> PRO, MAF 47/146.

<sup>102</sup> FW, 8 May 1942.

attended school harvest camps in 1943 and some 15,500 the following year, begs a variety of questions about gender which will probably only be effectively answered through carefully-conducted oral history studies. Evidence offered below suggests that where female camps were regularly run, notably in Lancashire, Gloucestershire, Kent, Sussex and Wiltshire, farmers responded positively and even enthusiastically to the girls' efforts. In Lancashire, for example, they worked with such enthusiasm that 'you could not drive them back to the camp', while a Gloucestershire CWAEC officer, visiting a camp at Slimbridge where 500 girls had picked 400 acres of potatoes, testified to the high quality of their achievements.<sup>103</sup>

By analogy with the Womens Land Army towards whom initial prejudice also evaporated when it became clear that women were perfectly capable of undertaking a whole range of exacting farm tasks previously the purview of men, farmers probably accepted the working schoolgirl with growing enthusiasm as the labour situation became more critical. If WLA personnel could drive tractors (which the wisecracks had believed to be virtually impossible) and could plough, make hay, operate threshing tackle and other machinery, then their younger counterparts could readily cope with harvesting tasks. True, they might have found the heavier harvest jobs burdensome, yet when it came to work like stooking, pitching sheaves and building stacks, girls under appropriate supervision functioned every bit as effectively as boys. Where nimble fingers or meticulous detail was required, as in the case of pea-harvesting, they may even have proved superior to their male brethren (Figure 3). Again, farmers tended to take the view, after experiencing the inputs of voluntary workers of either gender or members of the WLA, that females were keener, more enthusiastic and more readily receptive to new ideas than many men.<sup>104</sup> When the war came to a close and many women returned to domestic life, their experience of working on the land, in munitions factories and other sectors of the economy doubtless coloured their approach towards both their home and social lives. It might also be suggested that younger girls, having enjoyed the fruits of harvest wages and gained substantially in self-worth after 'doing their bit', took a rather different view of the world as they grew to maturity in the 1950s. Perhaps those 'false values', so much the concern of teachers worried about the effects of harvest camps on the outlook of boys, applied equally to the girls? Perhaps those relatively brief periods in single sex or mixed harvest camps when the labour input of girls was every bit as important as that of boys, contributed in some small measure to that growing sense of independence and rejection of the cult of deference which characterized the post-war generation? This, of course, is pure supposition and requires careful examination through oral history and the study of personal documents.<sup>105</sup> In like manner, the role of parents of both girls and boys is deserving of closer investigation. On the whole the limited range of evidence offered in this article suggests that children thoroughly enjoyed the harvest camp experience and

<sup>103</sup> PRO, MAF 47/142.

<sup>104</sup> Howkins, *Death of rural England*, pp. 128–9; B. Powell and N. Westmacott, *The Womens Land Army, 1939–1950* (1997), pp. 43–67. Nevertheless a degree of gender prejudice continued into the post-war years. During the course of a major survey of manpower training needs in Wales conducted in the early 1970s, it became clear that farmers had rather scant regard for

womens' abilities on the land. Beyond feeding calves, milking and 'opening gates', their potential was perceived (by their partners) as being limited to domestic and secretarial tasks. (R. J. Moore-Colyer and J. L. Lees, *Hill farming in Wales. Manpower and training needs*, unpublished report, Agricultural Training Board, 1973).

<sup>105</sup> In itself a fitting subject for a doctoral thesis.



FIGURE 3. 'Schoolgirls, girl guides and members of the Girls Training Corps picking field beans'.  
(photo courtesy of Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading, PFW PH2/W13/24)

derived much benefit from it. Yet there remain unanswered questions concerning, in particular, the attitudes and approach of parents towards the harvest camp project. How far was it a matter of children freely volunteering or being persuaded to do so by harassed parents keen to cast off the shackles of parenthood for a few brief weeks? Conversely there may have been situations where children volunteered to work *against* parental wishes so to liberate themselves from the restrictions of home. In any event, the study of these and kindred questions may cast further light not only on the school harvest camp scheme but also on more general issues of child-parent relations in the wartime and early post-war years.

For most boys and girls from urban backgrounds, working in the countryside either in term time or as harvest campers, offered a variety of novel experiences. The simple matter of getting out onto the land was a new departure for many who had no more than the haziest notions of the source of their daily bread. Uniquely different from home, the farmers' world with its arcane language and obscure traditions (to say nothing of the unfamiliar animals, the thistles and the mud) was a fascinating, strange and sometimes even frightening place.<sup>106</sup> But

<sup>106</sup> My correspondent Mr B. N. Jackson, a retired vet living in Cambridge, writes of the terror of evacuees in Devon when told a 'thrashing' machine was visiting the farm. In preparing this article I wrote to the *Farmers Weekly* in June 2003 inviting readers to contact me with their experiences as child harvest workers. I received several responses of which details are included in the text and footnotes.

familiarity grew with increasing contact, and arduous though much of the work may have been, it was officially believed that the enterprise was a potent force for the good in the sense that it contributed to building a bridge between the urban and rural communities. In the absence of any detailed oral history studies beyond the casual reminiscences of individuals, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions as to the views of the children themselves. Where they lived in a well-organized camp and worked for sympathetic and generous farmers they would, of course, respond rather more favourably than their brethren shackled to a farmer 'as mean as ditchwater' and eating and sleeping at a poorly-managed site.<sup>107</sup> Yet the very fact that throughout the peak war years children continued to volunteer in their thousands suggests that on balance the experience was a positive one. This may be illustrated by the recollections of a number of harvest camp workers who accepted my invitation to write about their experiences. Mrs Jean Wakely, a wartime pupil of Maidenhead County Girls School, regularly attended her local harvest camp at Shurlock Row, and on the basis of this was later able to study at the Usk Institute of Agriculture in Monmouthshire.<sup>108</sup> Mr Ian Crisp, who worked in the potato fields of Hertfordshire under the school-release arrangements, testified to the responsibility, trust and freedom of action accorded to children labouring on the land in what were '... the best years of my life'.<sup>109</sup>

Mr Gerald Pendry attended a harvest camp in Warwickshire in 1941 as a pupil of an inner London school and sent me a vivid account of his experiences, emphasising in particular his horror at the devastation of Coventry, far worse in his view than the London bombings. Mr Pendry and his fellow pupils travelled (with their bikes) by rail from Euston to Coventry and thence to Charlecote near Stratford-upon-Avon. Here they camped beside the village school and after briefing by the CWAEC representative found themselves stooking thistle-ridden sheaves of wheat and working with a flax-pulling machine. These rather 'Heath Robinson' devices, driven by the tractor power take-off, required constantly to be unblocked as the flax clogged the rubber pulling belts. Two boys were put to this exhausting and dangerous task under the supervision of a Polish tractor driver who spoke no English. The complete absence of any form of protection of drive shafts or belt guards '... would make any health and safety officers' of today hair stand on end'. After various other agrarian adventures Mr Pendry was able to take up an agricultural course for ex-servicemen at Brinsbury Manor in West Sussex and thence to purchase the Wealden dairy farm where he lives to this day.<sup>110</sup> Others too, no doubt, capitalized both on their working experience and the concomitant social encounters. As urban evacuees, children from metropolitan secondary schools and public schoolboys met in the harvest fields, they established an order of social contact which would have been

<sup>107</sup> As several of my respondents made clear.

<sup>108</sup> At Shurlock Row the local Scouts and Guides prepared the tents, cleaned the latrines, the younger girls being occupied with sandwich-making (information from Mrs J. Wakely, 28 July 2003).

<sup>109</sup> Information from Mr I. Crisp, 27 July 2003.

<sup>110</sup> Information from Mr G. Pendry, 28 July 2003. Prior to attending Brinsbury Manor, Mr Pendry worked on a downland farm near Sevenoaks through the appalling

winter of 1947, accumulating experience of milking and the associated contemporary jobs of hand-cutting frozen kale, chopping mangolds and slithering around the downland slopes with a cableless and hydraulic-free Fordson Major. It came as a great relief in 1948 when his employer bought a Ferguson TE20, equipped with three-point linkage, '... the biggest mechanical enhancement since I first attended that farming camp sixty-two years ago!'

improbable in the normal course of events. To the extent that they helped to blur class divisions, the camps might then be seen as elements in the promotion of the social fluidity developing in the post-war era.

Neither the harvest-camp scheme, the school-release arrangements, nor the employment on farms of prisoners of war met with the approval of the Trades Unions. The NUAW, in particular, objected vehemently to the notion of childrens' employment primarily on the grounds that this would hamper their educational and social development. Besides, they held that both children and prisoners of war constituted a source of cheap labour, the use of which might act against their own longer-term interests. Suspicious of the 'voluntary' principle embodied in school-release and harvest-camp schemes, they fretted at the prospect of advancing casualisation of the farm labour force. Teachers too, while generally accepting the need for childrens' labour, became even more frustrated by the demands of the Ministry of Agriculture for more school harvest camps and correspondingly less vacation time, and equally irritated by the inter-departmental wrangling characteristic of the early phases of the various schemes. Those who enthusiastically took up the challenge of running harvest camps before 1942 were confronted by the labyrinthine task of negotiating with a variety of different agencies often less than cooperative each with the other. The establishment of the SHCAC removed most of the difficulties, while the convenient device of the Defence Regulation legalized school-release thereby eliminating at a stroke many of the objections of both teachers and farm workers. Henceforth the Board of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture (*via* the CWAECs) would work more or less harmoniously in the interests of promoting school labour. So, in a very British sort of fashion, common sense prevailed in the pursuit of the general good. One way or another the wartime cereal and potato harvests were gathered in, much of the effort being contributed by people with little previous contact with the land. This article has focussed on the role of children in a great enterprise; the detailed story of adult volunteers and prisoners of war has yet to be told.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>111</sup> I shall be publishing an account of the role of prisoners of war as a contribution to the forthcoming volume under the editorship of Brian Short, Charles Watkins and John Martin. My article on the County War Agricultural Executive Committees (which touches the issues of wartime labour) will appear in a forthcoming number of *Welsh History Rev.* while I am currently working on voluntary adult labour in wartime England.

# Book Reviews

## Britain and Ireland

IAN ARMITT, EILEEN MURPHY, EIMÉAR NELLIS and DEREK SIMPSON (eds), *Neolithic settlement in Ireland and western Britain* (Oxbow Books, 2003). ix + 222 pp. 13 tables; 4 plates; 104 figs. £35.

Once upon a time, the start of the neolithic stood uncomplicatedly for the beginning of agriculture and settled existence, in the case of Britain and Ireland from around 4000 BC as the chronology is currently understood. Farmers farm, and do so in one place, agriculture and settled existence reinforcing one another. In this older model, farmers also tend to breed farmers, and so the beginnings of the neolithic were mostly ascribed to colonizers from abroad rather than to indigenous populations. Over the last twenty to thirty years of research, much more complicated possibilities have begun to emerge. The process by which agriculture was established may have been much more drawn out, it was suggested, with the keeping of animals perhaps more important initially than the cultivation of cereals. In some regions at least, the neolithic seems to be characterized by settlement other than permanent and long-lasting, one of several possible indications of some kind of continuity from earlier populations of foragers. The model of acculturation has not been universally accepted, especially in Ireland, and other recent research based on isotopic studies of protein in the diet has suggested the possibility once again of quite rapid transformations at the start of the neolithic; and those studies are themselves in turn the subject of current critical review. Meanwhile, improved dating begins to allow us to separate phenomena which have often been lumped together, as noted by Bradley in his concluding paper here, such that samples for isotopic studies have come so far largely from monuments perhaps two to three or three to four centuries after the start of the neolithic.

This very welcome volume therefore offers invaluable reports from these shifting front lines. It mainly does what it says on the tin, and discusses settlement, but the issues of diet, identity and beginnings are never far away, rumbling in the background. Beginnings are discussed

by Sheridan, Tresset and Woodman and McCarthy, the first two tending strongly to a more traditional view of colonizations from the continent, but the latter duo raising the important possibility of connections between central-west France and Ireland. There are other studies in the first part of the volume of individual sites or individual regions. Some of the authors reassert the older picture of neolithic people as permanently settled farmers, but others, such as prominently Cooney, Armit, Darvill, Barclay, Gibson, and Bradley, are more concerned to explore the many diversities evident within and between regions. Indeed, one of the major questions upon which we need to reflect much further is the scale of networks. What does it mean now to talk of lowland Scotland, or even parts of Ireland? As Alex Gibson perceptively notes, there seems to be a tension between the perhaps more local scale of day-to-day dwelling, and wider patterns of shared cultural affiliation manifested in artifact and monument styles.

One of the most striking changes to the archaeological record of this period in recent years has been the discovery of example after example in Ireland of timber-framed structures. The second part of the volume presents a series of important reports, brought together in this kind of detail for the first time, on what has been dubbed elsewhere (and repeated in the contents pages here but not in the text itself) the 'Irish house boom'. Over the same period of research, far fewer examples have turned up in southern Britain, and the cases of Balbridie on Deeside and Claish Farm in Stirlingshire might point to a further structured difference between south on the one hand and north and west on the other. Ballyharry, Cloghgers, and Thornhill, to cite the most complex of the structures here, join others already known of this important data set. The individual reports are quite brief and it mostly falls to Cooney, earlier in the volume, to reflect on the now evident diversities, and to Cross, as an endpiece, to discuss how we should label them. She challenges the prevailing notion of 'house' and its connotations of residential sedentism, preferring the label of 'hall', with connotations of feasting for restricted lineages. The jury is out on this one, since as Cross notes (p.199) final faunal and other reports are

not yet available. Hints of abundant cattle bone, burnt cereal depositions and numerous finds of fine serving pottery vessels are suggestive, but we need more detail.

This volume will be widely used and quoted. Watch out for a complementary forthcoming volume from the same publishers on monumentality in the neolithic of western Britain, edited by Chris Fowler and Vicki Cummings. That will add further reflections on the domains of dealing with the dead, the past, the landscape and community to this already complicated scene.

ALASDAIR WHITTLE  
Cardiff University

R. E. HARDSTAFF, *Norman Southwell. Food, fuel and farming, 1086 AD* (Southwell and District Local History Society, 2003). 74 pp. Illus. No price given.

Bob Hardstaff spent a lifetime in farming before bringing his practical knowledge to bear on issues which desk-bound historians take for granted. 'As a farmer', he writes, 'I have always wondered what had happened in the past to the land that I relied on for my living ...' (p. 1). What, in particular, he asked, was going on around Southwell at the time of Domesday Book? Taking the relevant data, and in defiance of 'some established academic circles' from whom 'I did not receive much encouragement' (p. 3), Hardstaff set about asking how efficient, effective and productive – even sustainable – farming was in this central Nottinghamshire parish at the time of Domesday Book. As he freely admits he simply did not believe some of the comments he read about inaccurate data and poverty-stricken farmers.

The result of Mr Hardstaff's scepticism is a provocative account of Southwell around the time of Domesday based on the 1086 data and his use of modern derived estimates for the human and animal populations of the area, and the cultivated land. Using modern data to calculate food production, including the results of experiments undertaken at Rothamsted, he comes to the conclusion that we underestimate eleventh-century farmers at our peril, and that they did a more than passable job of providing an adequate diet for the local population. Inevitably much of his work involves speculation, and some nifty footwork with the data. Academic historians will find gaps in his bibliography – notably the work of Bruce Campbell – and will doubtless raise questions about his methodology and his statistics, but the book is still well worth pondering because here is someone who knows farms, farmers and particularly the area he is studying. He is not prepared to accept bland platitudes about the past, and he has raised some interesting questions to which he has offered tentative answers. 'Many of the problems', he

concludes, 'that faced the farmers and workers of the Domesday period are familiar ones today although there are solutions available now which were not dreamed of in 1086' (p. 55). It is a lesson well worth remembering.

J. V. BECKETT  
University of Nottingham

DAVID HEY, *Medieval South Yorkshire* (Ashbourne: Landmark Publishing, 2003). 192 pp. Illus. £19.95.

This book is a substantially-revised version of David Hey's *The making of South Yorkshire*, published in 1979, which takes account of research undertaken in the intervening generation. Hey's original purpose was to produce a general survey to update interested amateurs and general readers that took account of new approaches and findings, and showed that 'South Yorkshire's history was as long and as interesting as that of other parts of England' and that 'local history could be studied in many different ways' (p. 6). Assessed in these terms, Hey has achieved his objectives.

Chapter 1 explores 'The Roman and British Legacy', including Roman forts, roads, industries and villas, Iron Age and Roman management of land and forests and occupation of farmsteads, the changes in land management and farming when Roman power ended, British place-names and kingdoms, the impact of the Anglian conquests, and defensive frontier earthworks. This is followed by a chapter exploring the origins, date and meaning of different forms of place-names, and the light cast by place-names on the Anglian and Viking conquests and settlements. Chapter 3 addresses 'Estates, villages and churches', including tenth- and eleventh-century changes in a period 'when most of our villages assumed their present shapes and farmers began to practise common-field agriculture' (p. 39). The disintegration of 'shires', establishment of new parishes and parish churches, nature of ancient districts and wapentakes, pre-Conquest importance of Conisbrough, Anglo-Scandinavian crosses, churches with Anglo-Scandinavian architecture, and preservation and alteration of village and estate structures are among the subjects covered. The book moves on to discuss the impact of the Normans, including the 'Harrying of the North'. The honours, families and religious patronage of Domesday tenants-in-chief are surveyed, as are post-1086 seigniorial and tenurial transformations (though this is pursued in only a limited way beyond 1135) and the region's castles and their remains. Chapter 5 examines knightly families and their moated sites, chapels, manors houses and deer parks, some of which can still be seen. Religious houses and their possessions and remains provide the focus of the next chapter, which gives special attention to Roche abbey. The discussion

also features Rotherham's College of Jesus, founded by Thomas Rotherham (1423–1500), Archbishop of York and Chancellor of England. Chapter 7 examines parish churches and influences on their location, Norman and Gothic architectural survivals, church interiors, stone crosses, and the impact of the Reformation. The region's six medieval towns are then discussed in turn.

In Chapters 9 and 10 the book considers subjects which are, perhaps, of greatest relevance to the readers of this journal: 'Villages, fields and farmhouses', and 'Lords and peasants'. Here Hey emphasizes the importance of village markets and the damaging effects on them of late medieval economic decline. He explores the distribution of and reasons for deserted medieval villages, the colonization of waste land, land reclamation, communal farming, establishment of new farms, types of farming and farming systems, rhythm of agricultural life, importance of cattle and sheep farming and turf digging, drainage projects, and surviving timber-framed buildings. These chapters also examine tenurial and economic relations between lords and their tenants, the terms on which land was held, estate incomes and management, peasant restrictions and opportunities, types of crops grown, specialized cattle and sheep farms, the rearing or keeping of other animals, other resources exploited by lords (including mills, minerals, and woodland), transport routes, family names, and peasant mobility.

The extensive range of subjects covered will doubtless provide general readers with a variety of interesting and appetising tasters, but in a number of places these are too thin and fast-changing to be properly enjoyed, as the discussion skips rapidly and somewhat disjointedly from topic to topic. But there is far more in Hey's book to admire than to quibble with. It brings its subject to life, not least through the many black-and-white photographs, maps and illustrations with which it is adorned. These are accompanied by a readable and entertaining text which benefits from the author's own extensive fieldwork and substantial knowledge of various types of evidence, including documents, aerial photography, archaeology, place-names, architecture and geology. One of the book's greatest merits is the way in which Hey weaves this material together into an informative and engaging discussion. It does much to illustrate and convey the richness of its subject, and not only to its intended audience of amateurs and general readers. The book will also be of value to specialists and students; including those interested in agricultural history, which features prominently in a number of sections. And to anyone interested in local medieval history, whether that of South Yorkshire or elsewhere, Hey's work will serve as an important and rewarding reminder that such

history is far less distant, obscure and document-based than we might think; that it is all around us, manifest in many and often surprising ways in the landscape that we inhabit.

PAUL DALTON

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JOHN HUNTER, *Field systems in Essex* (Essex Society for Archaeology and History, Occasional Papers, New Ser. 1, 2003). 41 pp. 25 figs. £5.95 incl. p & p from Dr Chris Thornton, 75 Victoria Road, Maldon, Essex, CM9 5HE.

Although it is a county that features heavily in the social, economic and agrarian history of England, particularly during the early modern period, very little has been published on the field systems of Essex. As the preface to this work notes, students of the subject may well have been deterred by the injunction in H. L. Gray's seminal work that few counties' systems were 'so difficult to describe' as those of Essex. The reason is the sheer diversity of such systems, and the way that they crowd in upon one another in this densely settled county.

John Hunter's short book provides a welcome attempt to impose some order on these systems, tease out a chronology of development, and to map the results. His study begins with a brief review of general trends in field systems in the county from prehistory, through Roman, Saxon, medieval, Tudor and Stuart, to Georgian and the nineteenth-century. He then moves on to consider a series of four case studies, drawn mainly from central and southern Essex. These demonstrate the ebb and flow of field boundaries and subdivisions, even if they illustrate examples of the best surviving sources rather than a typology of common field systems in the county. Hunter points out with some irony that the post World War II grubbing up of hedges and the expansion of field sizes in parishes such as Cressing Temple and Broxted has led to the recreation of fields the size and shape of those of demesne farming before the Black Death. The intervening centuries saw the morcelization of these fields and their subdivision by hedgerows under ever-encroaching farming in severalty. Tusser, a native of the county, rhymed in praise of such agrarian organization. Hunter also maps the areas of common field and heath enclosed in the nineteenth century. Such maps emphasize the acreage of the rough heath and wasteland in the county before Williamson and Wade Martins' 'light soils revolution'.

Hunter's maps suggest an explanation for the curious, contiguous, oblong parish/manors of Little Warley, Childerditch, West and East Horndon that lie parallel to each other across a long ridge in the south of the county. He hypothesizes that *circa* 900 AD these manors formed

links between the wooded commons of the ridge, and the summer grazing of the coastal marshes. Their corridor-like plan answers their original function as conduits from summer to winter pastures.

The variety of settlement patterns, parish boundaries and field systems means that these could be dealt with exhaustively only in a massive volume. Hunter's study is a splendid illustration of the possibilities and the potential worth of this type of research. It also shows how much can be gleaned from fieldwork and from the numerous estate maps and surveys within the county's extensive and well-ordered archives. It is to be hoped that he continues his researches, and that this work will inspire a larger, systematic study.

H. R. FRENCH  
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N. W. ALCOCK, *Documenting the history of houses* (British Records Association, 2003). x + 110 pp. 8 tables; 31 figs. £9.50.

I know from experience that tracing the history of a house is not a straightforward task. The person who finds a good run of records is fortunate indeed. More often, there are maddening gaps in the archives. Yet tracing the history of the house that you live in and finding out as much as you can about previous occupiers has become an enthusiasm shared by all sorts of interested amateurs. This guide is undoubtedly their best starting point.

Dr Alcock is a leading authority on vernacular architecture who combines surveying skills with an expertise in the study of relevant documents. His *Old title deeds* is the standard guide and his study of the houses and people of Stoneleigh is exemplary. He does all this in his spare time as a professor of chemistry at Warwick University.

Here he starts by identifying the key questions and emphasizing that knowing the type of house being studied is an essential pre-requisite to deciding what sort of documents may be significant. The search then begins with maps: Ordnance Survey, tithe and enclosure, estate, 1910 Valuation, 1940–43 National Farm Survey etc, followed by documentary sources including land tax and rate assessments, directories, electoral registers, estate rentals and hearth tax returns. The next chapter provides a succinct account of title deeds and miscellaneous individual documents. The emphasis then turns to understanding the social context and lifestyles of the occupants who have been identified, using wills and inventories, parish registers etc, though, surprisingly, census returns are mentioned only in passing. A chapter on the history of housing that places individual buildings in a wider context is followed by the most useful

chapter in the book which deals with several case studies, showing how to do it. Footnotes and a guide to further reading and resources complete the text.

DAVID HEY  
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R. W. HOYLE, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the politics of the 1530s* (OUP, 2001, pb edition, 2003). xvi + 487 pp. £17.99.

At the height of the Pilgrimage of Grace, Henry VIII's government lost control of 'virtually the whole of the North from the rivers Don in Yorkshire and Ribble in Lancashire to the borders of Scotland'. At the end of October 1536, 40,000 rebel troops faced a royal army of less than a quarter of that size. As such it was the largest of popular rebellion in Tudor England, but one that leaves many puzzles for historians. As the name 'Pilgrimage of Grace', coined by rebel leader Robert Aske suggests, the rebellion was in part motivated by religious grievances: opposition to the closure of smaller monasteries, and rumours that church goods were to be confiscated from the parishes. However, the exact reasons for the widespread popular support of this revolt remain difficult to discern. The rebellion consisted not of a single movement but a series of rebellions co-ordinated to varying degrees: the Lincolnshire revolt that collapsed just as Yorkshire rose, the rebellion of east and lowland Yorkshire under the leadership of Aske, and the Captain Poverty revolts of upland Yorkshire and the north-west. Hoyle provides an account of these dramatic events that is comprehensive, scholarly and readable. This book replaces the pioneering work of the Dodds, which has long needed updating, and complements the more detailed account of events in October 1536 provided by Bush's recent volume. It is certain to become the standard text on the rebellion, for students, researchers and other interested readers. Hoyle not only describes the three main movements, but tops and tails this with an account of events before and after the revolt. A chapter on '1536: The Year of Three Queens' demonstrates the unprecedented degree of political instability in the run-up to the revolt, as the populace saw two fundamental aspects of life, religion and marriage, undermined by the government. This helps to make sense of the role of rumour in the outbreak of revolt: not so much the product of ordinary people's ignorance, but of fear as to where these changes, about which they were well informed, might lead. A full account of the end of the rebellion sheds light on an important question in the organisation of the revolt: the role of the gentry. Did they lead the revolt willingly or were they threatened into leadership by the rebellious commons? Gentry leaders ensured that the revolt was ended by negotiation and

concessions, rather than battle. Subsequent actions do suggest significant splits within the rebel ranks. Many gentlemen hurried down to London to profess their innocence and loyalty to the crown. Aske also went to court, but more out of the misguided belief that he was now a man who could wield political influence. Meanwhile in northern England, the commons were restless and increasingly convinced they had been betrayed. Stilted attempts at renewed rebellion in early 1537 provided an excuse for violent retribution by the Crown: the execution of Aske and other ringleaders, as well as rank and file rebels in the north, many on trumped up charges.

Hoyle's approach throughout is to keep close to the sources and not to speculate or theorize any more than is necessary to provide a coherent account, although he does provide analysis, for instance of the social background of the rebels and their means of organization, as well as a narrative account. Occasionally the level of detail makes the train of disparate but simultaneous events difficult to follow. However the advantages of this approach greatly outweigh any disadvantages. Hoyle treads a delicate path through a rebellion that was made up of bluffs and double-bluffs, and thus full of contradictions. The rebels argued they were loyal to the king, but against his advisers, particularly Cromwell and his policies, while the king knew that the policies which they attacked were his own. Did they simply profess loyalty in order to avoid being accused of treason? Gentlemen claimed to have been coerced into leading the rebels, but much of the evidence comes from confessions written after the rebellion to try and save their heads. Besides, whether or not they were coerced, the involvement of gentlemen led to a better organized and more focused movement that stood some chance of achieving its aims – although it is not clear whether the demands sent to the king represented the original aims of the rebellion that caused the commons to rise. Perhaps it is fitting then, that Aske and others were executed on charges known to be largely untrue, despite the fact their involvement in the original rebellion was irrefutable. The Pilgrimage of Grace remains open to multiple interpretations, but Hoyle has done us a great service by providing a wide-ranging and accessible account based on meticulous study of the original documents from which our own judgements can be made.

JANE WHITTLE  
University of Exeter

DAVID EDWARDS, *The Ormond lordship in County Kilkenny, 1515–1642. The rise and fall of Butler feudal power* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003). pp. xiv + 388 pp. 14 tables; 1 illus; 10 plates; 1 map. €45.00.

This marvellous book makes a considerable contribution to our understanding of early modern Irish history. The Butler earls of Ormond were the major landowning family in County Kilkenny and, of the Irish noble families of the early sixteenth-century, after the earls of Kildare they were the most English in their culture, political allegiance and alliances and County Kilkenny the most English of the Irish counties outside the Pale. From the middle of the sixteenth century anglicized legal structures were adopted in the county. One of the reasons for this affinity to England was the education of successive earls at the English court. The tenth earl (Thomas, the Black Earl, d. 1614) moved freely between Ireland and the Elizabethan court, and through his access to the Queen, was able to act as a counterweight to successive lord deputies. His house at Carrick-on-Suir, built in 1565, would not look out of place in an English county and we can assume that this was deliberately so. James Butler, twelfth earl, was brought up an English Protestant in the household of archbishop Abbott. Their familiarity with English conditions and desire to advance the anglicization of their estates led both into difficulties, the tenth earl with a revolt in 1569–70 which was largely sponsored by his siblings, and the twelfth earl in the collapse of his authority in 1641.

Despite its title, Edwards has written a book (or perhaps two parallel books) which are overwhelmingly political in their concerns and orientation. The subtitle is a better guide to his concerns than the main title. The first two chapters contain an overview of County Kilkenny and the Ormond inheritance and it is probably here that social and economic historians will find most to interest them. There is good material on the farming economy of the estates and on the establishment of new markets (and the town of Castlecomber). It is established that the Kilkenny lowlands were a productive grain-growing agrarian society. Trade through Kilkenny and Waterford also contributed to the Englishness of the estates: in 1597 the earl is found exporting local cloth to Plymouth.

Edwards shows how the lands of the earldom were strengthened by grants of monastic lands in mid-century (a process which can be paralleled in England). In other respects the tenth earl's cordial relationship with Elizabeth led the earldom to acquire a standing and authority which her successors were eager to trim, especially after the end of Gaelic Ireland as a political force in 1603. Whilst the tenth earl substantially altered the character of his power in the 1560s with the abolition of coign and

livery (an arbitrary tax to support private armies), it was the twelfth earl who really began the modernization of the estates in the 1630s, driven by the unmanageable levels of debt that he inherited.

The second part of book is an extended interpretative account of the family and their role in Ireland which ends with the rising of 1641. There are some very good sections here: a challenging reinterpretation of the revival of Butler power under the ninth earl (the Red Earl, d. 1539); the origins of the rising of 1569, born out of the alienation of the tenth earl's younger brothers from his modernizing mission; of the inheritance disputes which followed the death of the tenth earl in 1614 and the descent into rebellion in 1641, with its account of the establishment of the Wandesford plantation in Idough. Seventeenth-century historians whose interest in British history ends at Holyhead and Fishguard (or Chester and Monmouth) should read at least the account of the inheritance dispute, in which James I arbitrated in the most partial fashion between the heir male, Walter Butler, eleventh earl (d. 1633) and Elizabeth countess of Desmond (d. 1628), the daughter of the tenth earl who married one of Buckingham's creatures, Sir Richard Preston. The earl's refusal to accept the royal arbitration of 1618 resulted in his imprisonment in the Tower until he submitted in 1625. This whole episode was, as Edwards says, characterized by the exercise of arbitrary justice. Edwards might have noted parallels with other contemporary royal interventions in English peerage disputes such as that between Lady Anne Clifford and her uncle, the fourth earl of Cumberland. (See B. Coward, 'Disputed inheritances. Some difficulties of the nobility in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries', *Bull. Institute of Historical Research* 44 (1971), pp. 194–215 and R. T. Spence, *Lady Anne Clifford, Countess of Pembroke, Dorset and Montgomery, 1590–1676* (1997), esp. ch. 3.) Equally dubious was the creation of the Idough plantation, where the twelfth earl sold Sir Christopher Wandesford land which was not his and whose possessors, the O'Brennans and others, were then dispossessed by law backed by military force. Wandesford was Irish Master of the Rolls: it is shown that he paid Wentworth a bribe of £1,000 for his co-operation. As contemporaries realized, the whole episode was corrupt in the extreme and is interesting to speculate how the scandal might have developed had Ulster not risen in revolt in October 1641.

This is a very notable contribution early modern Irish history. The Butler earls of Ormond were unique not only in their standing in Ireland but in the survival of their archives. After a reading of Edwards' book, one is left wondering whether it would be possible to write an economic account of the estates. Edwards mentions

potentially useful materials which it is not his purpose to exploit but which others might wish to look at in the future. One thing is clear: over large parts of the estate, intermittent private and state violence against people and property must have been responsible for creating the very economic malaise which the English colonial interest claimed to cure through the establishment of property rights to land on the English model.

I am sure though that I am not the only reader whose ease of understanding would have been aided by a genealogy of the family and more maps.

R. W. HOYLE

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STEVEN HOBBS (ed.), *Wiltshire glebe terriers, 1588–1827* (Wiltshire Record Society, 56, 2003). xxiv + 554 pp. £20.

Glebe terriers contain valuable information on parochial and agricultural history, and their publication provides an admirable project for local record societies. This useful volume presents in condensed form material from terriers for 250 Wiltshire parishes between 1588 and 1827, with at least three terriers compiled at different times for most parishes. The terriers describe in detail the property belonging to the incumbent of each parish, including glebe land, the parsonage house, tithes, offerings, endowments and all other sources of income. They list parish charities, rents from cottages, tithes on mills, fees for marriage and burial, payments for occasional sermons or prayers, and often give details of churches and churchyards. The descriptions of parsonage houses illustrate the rising prosperity of incumbents and chronicle the change from small timber-framed, thatched houses to larger brick-built premises with tiled roofs. Above all, the terriers are a fruitful source for agricultural history. The glebe lands were often intermixed with those of parishioners, the parson sharing common rights with his neighbours, and the terriers illustrate the complexity of common field organization. For example, at Sutton Mandeville in 1609 in addition to 'all manner of tithes', the parson had 16½ acres of arable land in more than 20 plots in the three fields. At Yatton Keynell in 1671 the wealthy incumbent possessed extensive meadow, pasture and 'New Inclosures' and had 30 acres of arable in the common fields; by 1783 most of this arable land had been inclosed. The terriers contain much information on the management of the fields and meadows, grazing rights, the progress of inclosures, and the regulation and folding of common sheep flocks.

Naturally, the principal emphasis is on tithes, methods of payment and the collection of perishable produce such as milk, eggs and fruit. Often described in detail is the 'modus' or complex agreement made in each parish

for tithes on livestock and their offspring which could seldom be conveniently divided into tenths. Some of the local tithe customs were extremely complex, and incumbents evidently had a difficult choice between diminishing their income and that of their successors, or alienating members of their flock by insisting on their rights or invoking the powers of the ecclesiastical courts. Some incumbents accepted money payments, others refused or reverted to taking tithes in kind, as at Lydiard Tregoze in 1783 where the rector objected to a previous agreement. Other problems arose because of a change in land use from pasture to arable, since tithes on livestock were often payable to the vicar, whereas tithe on corn might be claimed by a lay rector. The possibilities for conflict were especially numerous in the low-lying pasture lands of north Wiltshire. Here livestock was overwintered or was fattened for short periods before being driven to distant markets. For these beasts incumbents were entitled to receive 'agistment' money, but it was almost impossible for them to keep track of livestock movements. The work of drovers is evident, for example, at Stratton St Margaret in 1705 where 'Welch beasts' are specifically mentioned.

As well as the tithes on corn and livestock there are numerous references to fruit, garden crops, herbs, poultry and eggs. Tithes were paid on conies at Aldbourne, on swans, pigeons and bees at Fisherton Delamere, on bees and honey at Tisbury, on geese, turkeys, and 'nurseries of fruit' at Trowbridge, on fish caught in the Avon at Britford and on eels at Great Wishford. At Ludgershall in 1786 tithes on roots, potatoes, and turnips are mentioned. In several terriers there are references to flax, hemp, nuts, apples, pears, plums and venison. In addition, there is much information on many aspects of parish life, ranging from the status and income of the clergy to church architecture and furnishings, and from parochial charities to customs, rogationtide processions and mills. Future researchers will find much of interest and value in this informative volume.

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ANGUS J. L. WINCHESTER (ed.), *Thomas Denton, A perambulation of Cumberland, 1687-1688, including descriptions of Westmorland, the Isle of Man and Ireland* (Surtees Society, 207, 2003). 606 pp. £50.

Thomas Denton's manuscript perambulation of Cumberland was prepared in the 1680s to a commission from Sir John Lowther of Lowther, and has been in the family muniments ever since. It was transferred to Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle with the rest of the archive in 1962, and has now been transcribed for publication. Angus Winchester's introduction sets the document in

its context, and provides a pen portrait of Denton himself. Lowther almost certainly sought contemporary information, but Denton provided him with much more, including historical material and his own assessment of places well beyond his original Cumberland remit. Denton had previously prepared for Lowther an account of the Honour of Penrith and Forest of Inglewood, and he had a local lawyer's grasp of the problems of tenant right in the area, so Lowther knew his man and his skills. Denton was also fully cognizant with issues the Cumbrian aristocrat would want investigating, including the boundaries of parishes, townships and estates, income from rents, the value of mills and mines, church livings and impropriated tithes, together with details of customary tenure in the area. Although the manuscript included extensive borrowings from other writers, which this edition highlights in order to avoid confusion, Denton added a good deal of his own material to provide a wealth of contemporary information about the area.

Denton was typical of a genre, a topographer/historian with a legal background, and a good working knowledge of more or less anything. He shows a keen eye for detail, to provide a useful account of his own society, although his agricultural comments tend to be rather more general than we might prefer. In Distington he noted 'the soyle here is very good for corn', (p. 109), while at Workington 'the demesne (being a good soyle for pasturage, as well as corn & hay) breeds the largest cattle & sheep in all the countrey' (p. 113). Not much corn was sold from Keswick 'by reason that the town is so environ'd with mountains & hills that little or no corne growes within many miles of this place'. Thus, Denton continued, warming to a theme he perhaps found more interesting, 'the tythe wool & lamb is doubly more valuable to the minister of the parish then the tythes of both corn & hay' (p. 137). There is much more in a similar vein, but the impression is that for Denton the farming was secondary to his preoccupation with the relationship of landlord and tenant, hence his long discussions of tenure. In any case he clearly wanted to describe the community and its local economy, including industry, trade, fairs, and other forms of commerce, although perhaps surprisingly he had little to say about country houses and there are few descriptions of churches. Fortunately Denton had a sense of humour, hence his recounting of the story of the new parish clerk imposed upon the vicar of Ribton. The man was clearly not up to the task: he could sing the appropriate tune only for Psalm 4. Forced to try to bluff, he tried to sing Psalm 25 to the same tune, 'but finding the tune was longer by two semibreifs, he was forced to conclude, I lift

my heart to thee, with Hay! Hay!', which provoked the congregation 'to a loud laughter' (p. 152). We can only hope that Sir John Lowther enjoyed such vignettes among the discussions of economic and tenuous matters which otherwise fill the pages of Denton's perambulation.

J. V. BECKETT  
University of Nottingham

ANNE ORDE (ed.), *Matthew and George Culley. Travel journals and letters, 1765–1798* (OUP for the British Academy, 2002). x + 272 pp. 4 maps. £35.

The surviving papers of the Culley family of County Durham and north Northumberland are deposited in the Northumberland Record Office. The publication of selections from these papers is a welcome addition to the British Academy's series on records of social and economic history. The journals describe tours made between 1765 and 1798 to many areas in the Midlands and to most of Scotland. The letters of 1784–5 cover a journey by George Culley to visit Robert Bakewell at Dishley, followed by a joint tour around central England. The subjects covered by the book include agriculture, social history, economics, topography, dialect, material culture and, remarkably, a fascinating section on the Scottish piping traditions and the piping schools associated with Highland music.

Much agricultural writing and journalism has been produced by people who struggled to have any success in the challenging world of practical farming. It is good to have published some of the Culley papers for they were very successful as both farmers and businessmen. The Culley brothers were originally based at the 200-acre Denton farm near Darlington in County Durham. Following visits by two of the brothers in 1762 and 1763 to Robert Bakewell in Leicestershire, the farm of Fenton in north Northumberland was rented and became the basis of a growing farming empire. By the 1790s their stock had grown to 550 cattle and 4440 sheep on some 4000 acres of improved land, much of which was in arable cultivation. In 1801 they were paying over £4000 in rent and tithes and returning a profit of £9000 per year. Their stock, much of which had been developed from Bakewell's own or utilizing his systems, was accepted as among the best in Britain. Many agricultural experts of the time consulted the Culleys, whose publications were lauded even by the ascerbic Yorkshireman William Marshall. The Culleys were close friends of Robert Bakewell and knew more than most agriculturalists of the work of this key figure in the improvement of cattle, sheep, horses and pigs.

How do the Culleys, whose financial successes were founded on practical wisdom, perform as commentators?

The publication of the journals and letters does not disappoint. This volume is a must for any agricultural historian interested in the period. It is packed full of detailed comments and quotable passages with insights into farmers and breeders visited. With the exception of one of the Scottish tour journals, which was smartened up for potential publication, the words are the Culleys' own and survive as private family records, containing the kind of comments which would not appear in any print publication of the period. The tours seem to have been undertaken for the purpose of information-gathering and self-improvement. George Culley remarks during his 1765 visit to Bakewell: 'I must be dull and stupid indeed if I do not improve'. Material on the Culleys' dealings with Robert Bakewell is scattered throughout the book, reflecting their involvement with him from 1762 right up to his death in 1795. It is apparent that both brothers had enormous respect for Bakewell and his stock, though there are some disagreements and misgivings about his work: 'rather to be admired than imitated' George remarks during a visit to Dishley in 1771. The publication of these papers gives greater access to new information on Bakewell and the volume is worth its £35 for this alone.

But there is much more here than descriptions of visits to Dishley. The Culleys recorded a great deal of information wherever they went, and this material deserves the attention of historians of diverse interests. Their comments on Wiltshire harness and horse bells would make a fine addition to any book on horse brasses, the 34 black horses counted in the Duke of Hamilton's park is a must for any history of Clydesdale horses, and students of the scandalous sons of George III might note the judgement of Culley's stockman on the Duke of Cumberland: 'goes badly on his legs; perhaps Lady Grosvenor thinks differently'.

The editor of the volume has done an excellent job with what must have been difficult writing to transcribe. There are errors: for example on page 247 'Mr Nasson' is likely to be Mr Mason, the famous breeder of Chilton. But these seem to be few. I found the maps a little sparse and would have liked the tours to have been marked in detail on maps to locate farms to which particular comments relate. The volume is well indexed and contains a sound introduction, a bibliography of published and unpublished sources, a page on the non-standard weights and measures used by the Culleys and a glossary of less familiar words from the manuscript.

This book is a real treasure. I hope the publishers have printed enough to go around all the historians who will want it on their shelves.

JOHN GALL  
Beamish Museum

J. E. C. PETERS, *Discovering traditional farm buildings* (Shire Publications, 1981, Reprinted and updated 2003). 80 pp. 38 figs; 31 photographs. £4.99; JOHN MCCANN, *Clay and cob buildings* (Shire Publications, Third edition 2004). 48 pp. 76 colour and 18 black and white illus. £4.99.

It is good to see these two basic texts up-dated and republished. J. E. C. Peters' book *The development of farm buildings in west lowland Staffordshire up to 1880* was published in 1969 and is regarded as one of the founding texts in farm building studies. *Discovering traditional farm buildings* draws both on Peters' Staffordshire work and his continued studies in the field. As with all Shire Publications the text is clear and straightforward and the book well-illustrated with both black and white photographs and informative architectural drawings. The main differences between this edition and the earlier one is in the revised 'Places to visit' and bibliography. Its format, length and price make it an ideal book to recommend to extra-mural students and those embarking on fieldwork for the first time.

John McCann's book was first published in 1983 and has now been re-issued with an updated bibliography and colour photographs which makes for an attractive format. The subject of clay and cob buildings is considered historically and the various techniques and regional differences are also clearly described. The main reasons for the use of clay were its cheapness as a raw material in areas where stone was not available, and the lack of bricklaying or masonry skills needed by the builder. This meant it was much favoured for cottages and farm buildings from the late-eighteenth century, especially outside closed or estate villages, where such cottage building as landowners permitted was most likely, at least in the clay area, to use bricks produced in estate brick kilns. In open villages, speculators looking for the cheapest way to build often used one of a number of building techniques based on clay, like clay lump (building blocks made of sun-dried clay with straw mixed in). But there were exceptions, as McCann points out. The Duke of Bedford and his agent were enthusiastic builders in *pisé* (dry clay heavily rammed down within shuttering so that it consolidated to form, in effect, artificial rock), while Copinger Hill in Suffolk wrote on the use of cob (mud walls, built up gradually and allowed to dry at each stage before the next layer was added). There is certainly room for further research in this field.

This book is mainly concerned with surviving examples of these techniques and their continuing use. Although the fact that the use of unfired earth was known in the ancient world is acknowledged, there is only a passing reference to its use in medieval Britain. It

is likely that as wood became scarcer, the use of clay with less and less in the way of timber support increased considerably. However these buildings would have been the humblest cottages and evidence for them is usually confined to excavations and it was not until the eighteenth century that any reference to them is to be found in print. A fascinating mid-eighteenth-century drawing from Essex Record Office showing a 'Cottage built for the Smallest Quantity of money as possible ... Done with Clay wall' (p. 15) is included and may be the earliest documentary evidence of the technique.

As a factual guide and basis for further work this is a useful book well up to the standards we have come to expect from Shire Publications.

SUSANNA WADE MARTINS  
*University of East Anglia*

E. A. WRIGLEY, *Poverty, progress and population* (CUP, 2004). xiv + 463 pp. 49 tables; 17 figs. £55 (hb); £19.99 (pb).

This important volume is made up of fifteen essays, thirteen published between 1986 and 2003, and two more previously unpublished. The unpublished essays are of special interest in that they serve as markers to Sir Tony Wrigley's distinguished career as the premier economic and demographic historian of pre-industrial England. 'Demographic retrospective' (Chapter 15) defends the methodology and findings of a famous research project that took three decades, while 'The occupational structure of the English labour force in the mid-nineteenth century' (Chapter 5) is a prologue to a new project on occupational structure in earlier decades and centuries. That new project, also hinted at in the introduction (p. 6), is the latest phase in a distinguished career stretching back over four decades.

Part I is about 'the wellsprings of growth'. Wrigley highlights how the gradual nature of economic growth before 1850 – just enough to sustain population growth and keep living standards from falling – implies that England was already 'different' in 1700. Its economy must already have been much more productive than those of its continental neighbours. Angus Maddison (in *The World Economy: a millennial perspective*, 2001, p. 90) corroborates: English GDP per head was half again as high as France's in 1700, and nearly double that of Spain and Portugal – though only two-thirds that of the Netherlands. The key to England's success lay in institutions that allowed it to marshal land and labour efficiently, and in its coal. By the early nineteenth century England's occupational structure was not that of an economy that had undergone an 'industrial revolution': but neither was it that of a 'pre-industrial economy'. This was reflected in the major roles of

traditional manufacturing occupations (carpenters, tailors, butchers) and the size of the tertiary or service sector.

Wrigley's long-standing interest in Malthusian economic demography culminated in an elegant seven-volume edition of *Works of Thomas Robert Malthus* (which he co-edited with David Souden) in 1986. Here that interest is reflected in Chapters 6 to 8. Two of these chapters are concerned with the issue of poverty and the prospects of the working class, while the third addresses the connection between the 'high cost of provisions' and famine. In his second publication, Malthus did not deny the connection but noted that in 1799 western Sweden suffered much more than England, although the price of its staple food (rye) rose much less than that of corn in England. The observation feeds into the emphasis on entitlements stressed by another close reader of Malthus, Amartya Sen.

One of Wrigley's earliest papers was his 1967 classic on London's role in the English economy c. 1650–1750 (in *Past & Present*, no. 37). Part II of the present collection is devoted to the role of towns and cities. Themes covered here include Adam Smith on the positive feedback effects resulting from trade between country and town; the connection between pre-industrial urbanization and occupational distribution; and the impact of demand on the regional and occupational patterning of the population.

Historical demography is addressed in Part III (Chapters 12 to 15). This section promises to be Wrigley's last word on a project that was his core research interest for three decades. Wrigley engages in particular with the critiques of Stephen Ruggles and Peter Razzell; he is more impressed by the former's worries that reconstituted families are subject to selection bias than by the latter's feisty insistence that the underreporting of deaths in parish registers led the Cambridge Group to underestimate the role of mortality in English population change. Wrigley takes both critiques seriously, however, and his formidable defence of the Cambridge Group's project surely succeeds in its aim of shifting the balance away from 'those who remain in doubt'. The rebuttals apply simulations, counterfactual calculations, clever comparisons with Scandinavian data, and *reductiones ad absurdum*.

It is a sobering fact that Sir Tony Wrigley managed to produce these papers over a period that also saw the publication of the multi-authored *English population history from family reconstitution 1580–1837* (1997) and his tenure as president of the British Academy. *Labor continuat*.

CORMAC Ó GRÁDA  
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TIMOTHY SHAKESHEFF, *Rural conflict, crime and protest. Herefordshire, 1800–1860* (Boydell Press, 2003). viii + 230 pp. 1 table; 22 figs; 2 maps. £55.

This volume contributes to a now firmly established debate on the nature of rural conflict in the nineteenth-century English countryside, and the familiar principal elements of what historians have categorized as social protest. Most forms remained firmly outside the law rendering the perpetrators open to prosecution for crimes including capital ones, prior to the latter's incremental removal from the 1820s. In historiographical terms, the book is to be welcomed on two main counts. First, in the choice of Herefordshire, Shakesheff has focused on a western borderland county, in stark contrast to the existing concentrations on East Anglia and southern England, though he perhaps exaggerates that geographical feature. One important factor here is the failure of the Swing quasi-insurrection to penetrate Herefordshire, and with it the county escaped the most fearsome expression of overt rural protest – much of it demonstrably imitative – as it swept westwards from Kent, before swirling round into the South Midlands and into East Anglia. Thus Herefordshire's historian is denied this expression of the serious socio-economic – and in places political – tensions exposed by Swing mobilizations elsewhere. There were, however, three incendiary attacks in the county between 1829 and January 1831. This difference symbolizes the second contrast because almost all of Shakesheff's evidence involves covert action; indeed, one can detect this feature in the famine years of 1799–1801. Then Herefordshire escaped the intense food-rioting – though not what the local press identified as 'disposition to riot' and which the principal study of these years categorizes as actual disturbances – which recurrently engulfed much of England, though two arson cases were reported from the county.

With a small number of exceptional and minor mobilizations, including one against encroachers where locals 'acting in the character of commoners' demolished fences, this then is a study of technically-criminal acts committed covertly, ranging from endemic poaching, the petty theft of wood and crops (corn, fruit and root vegetables) growing in the fields and orchards, to the more serious acts of sheep-stealing, animal-maiming and incendiarism. And here we enter into problematic territory which hinges on how perpetrators perceived and legitimated their actions, and ultimately on their motives, especially those of animal maimers and arsonists. In the case of Herefordshire, this operation is rendered much more difficult by the available evidence. It appears that those responsible for the records of the Assize abandoned their eighteenth-century practice of

preserving the depositions, namely the statements of witnesses, including those of victims and even some perpetrators; the same documentary loss was presided over by county Clerks of the Peace with respect to cases heard by Quarter Sessions. Shakesheff is primarily dependent on the two county newspapers, both published in the city of Hereford. Although the quality and volume of local newspaper reportage expanded exponentially across this period, detailed coverage of the trials of most offenders – ranging from poachers to sheep-stealers – is rare, largely restricted to major offenders, notably arsonists and not even all of them. In the main, offences which went undetected, received little coverage with the partial exceptions of the most serious.

To degrees, Shakesheff makes good use of the sources consulted, including those categories of Quarter Sessions records which have survived. This enables him to compile various statistical tables respecting prosecuted crime and conviction rates, and relate these to various quantitative data respecting living standards. As might be expected, these reveal some relationships between prosecuted crime and the cost of living, though other contemporary statistical compilations – notably poor-law expenditure – are unexpectedly absent. He is also able to detect some increase in prosecuted crime deriving from policing initiatives, though these were exclusively local as the county eschewed adoption of the permissive rural policing acts of 1839–40, and the issue of detection is addressed in one of the more valuable chapters. But even here, there are problems; did for example the increases in prosecutions for sheep-stealing also reflect its loss of capital status in 1832? Another significant chapter addresses ‘criminal women’ responsible for much – but certainly not all – thefts of wood, and the taking of grain and other produce; these are discussed in the context of the virtual extinction of remaining common rights through enclosure over this period.

There is much to be applauded in this work; our empirical knowledge is fortified, and interpretative debates enriched. Having said that, there are some structural shortcomings and glaring omissions. One wonders why this study commences in 1800, when the entire country was threatened by famine in wartime, rather than say the better benchmark of 1790 before the spiralling inflation and intensifying poverty following 1793. More importantly, the socio-economic context is not systematically addressed. True, we learn that the county’s landlords and farmers responded to rising produce prices with a further round of enclosure and increase in arable acreages, which possibly aggravated the impact of the enduring post-war depression as it did elsewhere. Quite critically, the issue of poor relief is not coherently addressed. Although there are numerous

passing references to the poor law and the odd recognition of its importance, including the overall ‘mesh of the welfare net was getting wider’, the fundamental impact of the New Poor Law of 1834 is not analyzed despite its status as the most hated statute enacted in the entire century. If Shakesheff acknowledges that the cost to the parish of workhouse accommodation for families left without the main breadwinner on father’s imprisonment or transportation for theft, probably deterred many victims from prosecution, he fails to see the broader relevance of the loss of customary allowances-in-aid-of-wages even when correctly ascertaining that most sheep-stealers sought meat for the pot. He persists in arguing that was poachers’ identical primary motive too, and this also serves as an example of his penchant – not confined to this topic – for flying in the face of his own evidence. The majority of poachers ‘poached for their own consumption’ (cf. pp. 20, 149–50.) In fact, a brace of partridges or pheasants, added very little to the pot. The need to hang them also dictated an additional risk of detection; disposing of them through the highlers who traversed the countryside dealing in legitimate and poached items was lucrative. For the poor, the proceeds secured a tranche of goods ranging from alcohol, replacement footwear and clothing, and the wherewithal to meet rents once their payment by overseers of the poor – said to be universal in the county – was stopped by the loathed Poor Law Commission. After the trade in game was legalized by a new licensing system in 1831, one Herefordshire debater in the local press in February 1834 observed that the Act’s supporters had claimed that ‘game would become so cheap no poacher would find it worth his while to *pursue his trade*, but how different has been the result’ (p. 175, my emphasis), an observation underpinned by Shakesheff’s own statistics of convictions under the game and trespass laws.

Although there are – curiously – no acknowledgements, the word thesis appears in a couple of places, suggesting that the book derives from a doctorate. In this context, quite uniquely for any major – and unusual even for very localized studies – the footnotes reveal no references to Public Record Office holdings. First, if the Assize records for Herefordshire – unlike other Oxford Circuit documentation – do not contain depositions for most of this period, extant papers, including indictments, have some value. Depositions from the county for the years 1800–1 do exist; hence my earlier remark about actual riot, when the county press – not uniquely – spoke of only a disposition towards collective action. Secondly, incendiarism and animal-maiming, were often perceived as terrorist attacks by landlords and farmers, which warranted reportage to the Home Secretary; moreover, given the growing volume of crime over this

period, rising levels alone repeatedly galvanized provincial communications to Whitehall (in addition to state sponsored investigations into policing – or the lack of it), and these contain valuable evidence. Thirdly, the records of the Poor Law Commission, especially in the early years following 1834, contain correspondence often embracing a wide variety of issues, including protest and crime, with almost every rural New Poor Law Union. While not all historians of these features of rural communities have used the latter source, one might argue that it should join the other two as obligatory for consultation, where available for the 1830–50 period.

ROGER WELLS

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MARGARET E. SHEPHERD, *From Hellgill to Bridge End. Aspects of economic and social change in the upper Eden valley, 1840–95* (University of Hertfordshire Press, 2003). xx + 380 pp. 47 tables; 41 illus. £35.

Margaret Shepherd's book provides a useful addition to the growing corpus of studies on rural areas in the nineteenth century. The monograph is based on an upland area in northern England and, as such, is to be welcomed given the relative paucity of research in this particular field. The book strongly merits its place as the second volume in the University of Hertfordshire's Regional and Local History series. It places its local in-depth study of change in the upper Eden valley firmly in a regional setting and, where necessary, also provides detailed analysis of events at the regional level of Cumbria.

Dr Shepherd draws on a wealth of primary source evidence for her study, using as a starting point the census enumerators books for 1841 to 1891. It would have been useful if the period had been extended to 1901 to take advantage of the latest census information and to provide a wider perspective on events throughout the whole of the Victorian period. However, there is a reason for the termination date. The investigation of the topic started as research towards a PhD which was awarded in 1992. Apart from not utilizing the 1901 census, generally the work has been satisfactorily updated since 1992. This is particularly the case in respect of secondary source material. However, there are some surprising, though albeit minor omissions of references to scholarly debate. These include, for example Nicola Verdon's recent work on the role of women in agriculture.

As to be expected from the title, the book covers a number of topics. It ranges competently and confidently through an overview of the economy of north Westmorland to the detail of agricultural change. In addition to the economic topics which consume three of the five

core chapters, the study also spends some time examining social change and migration. In the chapter on the economy, the towns of the area have been usefully grouped according to economic type. This results in a clearer insight into the significance of change in the upper Eden valley. In the detailed agricultural section all the expected topics are found, from landownership and occupancy to land use and the labourer.

The book provides a mass of detail which very occasionally results in a density of prose that affects the clarity of the points under discussion. Despite the fact that the bibliography demonstrates extensive reading around the subject, in a few places, and particularly in the first part of the book, the study tends to be rather myopic. More reference to academic debate on the particular topic and situating the upper Eden experience within that debate would have been helpful. For example, the chapter conclusions could have included some assessment of the typicality or otherwise of the findings. This approach is taken to good effect later in the book in the very clear sections on the employment of women and children. In her analysis of women's occupations, Dr Shepherd draws findings from other areas, acknowledges the problems of calculating the extent and type of female work and makes useful conclusions as she disaggregates her own research into an interesting analysis of the work patterns of single, widowed, and married women. Similarly, where she forays into research on Cumbria for the transport and communication chapter, the resultant information is fascinating as she details the linkages in the region and then beyond.

The section on social and cultural activities ranges widely and covers many aspects of society and civic life. Despite Dr Shepherd's caveat of not enough space to cover all aspects, her handling of education, religion, friendly societies, freemasonry and the temperance movement is detailed and informative. The final chapter on migration does an admirable job of examining the distance travelled, the different types of destinations and the levels of in- and outflow, though here it would have been particularly interesting to have seen some analysis based on the 1901 census.

In her conclusion, Dr Shepherd notes that, as has been discovered in similar studies, immense differences of experience can be identified between neighbouring parishes and it is unhelpful to use a single parish as a paradigm for a region. She also concludes that, while the upper Eden valley effectively deindustrialized during the period under study, it did not return totally to the pre-industrial experience. Finally, she acknowledges that the arrival of the railway had a significant impact on the changes taking place in the area.

The study is well supported by maps, tables,

photographs and indexes and is accompanied by detailed footnotes. The breadth and depth of research, albeit for a rather limited period, means that the book will be of great interest to both those interested in Cumbria as well as the specific area of the upper Eden valley. Further, despite the few minor reservations noted above, the book is of immense value to the researcher of the Victorian period who wishes to gain an insight into the extent of change in a remote upland rural area during a period of industrial and social upheaval.

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T. A. BURDEKIN (ed.), *A Victorian farmer's diary. William Hodkin's diary 1864–66. Life in and around Beeley on the Chatsworth estate* (Derbyshire County Council, 2003). 144 pp. Illus. £8 incl. p & p from Library Administration, Cultural and Community Services Department, County Hall, Matlock, DE4 3AG.

The small estate village of Beeley lies a mile or two to the south of Chatsworth. Older members of the Society may remember a visit there during the Matlock conference in 1973. William Hodkin was in his mid-30s when he kept this diary, which has been edited by his great-grandson and illustrated with contemporary photographs and extracts from local newspapers. When he died in 1899 at Edensor, the main village on the Chatsworth estate, he was described in his obituary as 'a farmer and miller in an extensive way of business', who was active in public affairs as a parish councillor, poor law guardian and churchwarden.

The main value of the diary is in detailing the day-to-day work on the farm, as the seasons advanced. The varied tasks were performed by William himself, his father-in-law and his labourer, John. We read about rolling and harrowing in the fallow, the spreading of lime, harrowing the potato ground, ploughing the turnip fallow, cutting thistles, mowing bracken, leading oats all day in the waggon, spreading manure, harvesting oats, gathering apples, shearing sheep, ringing pigs, cleaning out the pigeon cote and the hen roost, repairing walls, catching rabbits, killing pigs, and an endless succession of other jobs. We also see how a farmer such as Hodkin was prepared to earn extra money from small local industries. He worked a coal pit on Beeley Moor and carted slag from an old lead mine to the nearest railway station at Rowsley.

Bakewell market was his main outlet for the sale of livestock, but he was prepared to cross the moors with his horse and cart to Chesterfield to sell hay seeds and to buy clover seeds, trefoil and rye grass. He sometimes sent sacks of flour as far as Newark. He often mentioned other Peak District villages, whose feasts he attended,

particularly if he had relations there, and like all countryfolk he was prepared to walk long distances. He surprises us in August 1864 by recording a railway journey to Manchester and Liverpool and a sea crossing to the Isle of Man and by a second visit with his wife to Liverpool, where he saw 'a very great market, I should think many thousands of sheep and cattle'. Another link with the outside world is revealed by his sending a cheque to the Paraffin Light Company in Birmingham.

He rarely caught sight of the Duke of Devonshire, but in June 1865 he was present at the great volunteer and yeomanry review in Chatsworth Park. Instead, he dealt with the agent, Mr Cottingham, and gave as good as he got in a dispute about land that he had ploughed adjoining Beeley Plantation (thus interfering with the game) and about his complaint that his farm was overrun with rabbits. After threatening to turn him out, the agent eventually relented. Life in an estate village was perhaps not so feudal after all.

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MARK FREEMAN, *Social investigation and rural England 1870–1914* (Royal Historical Society / Boydell, 2003). xi + 217 pp. 2 tables. £40.

Social surveys of Victorian and Edwardian urban England are well-known to historians. But, as Mark Freeman's illuminating monograph points out, investigations into rural life from the same period are also numerous. This book sets out to examine the changing methodology used by these rural social investigators and the divisions between them. Although the book begins with a useful overview of early surveyors of the countryside, its main focus is the period after 1870 when rural issues – trades unionism, depopulation and the land question – became national ones. Freeman identifies four main groups of investigations: the official government inquiry carried out by appointed commissioners; newspaper investigations undertaken by special correspondent journalists; systematic sociological surveys which complemented the great urban inquiries; and finally, the cultural investigation based on close personal contact with the rural poor. Much of the material under scrutiny is familiar to rural historians, from the royal commissions and Board of Trade reports, to the country writing of Augustus Jessopp, Richard Jefferies, Henry Rider Haggard and George Sturt. Others, perhaps, are not so well-known: Booth and Rowntree's own studies into rural life are assessed alongside similar contemporary surveys by Harold Mann and Maud Davies. Such studies, the author contends, 'helped to shape the ways in which rural society was understood by contemporaries and has since been interpreted by

historians' (p. 12). What this book shows, then, is that the historian cannot afford to ignore the methodological impetus behind this material as it moulded the attitudes, findings and conclusions of the investigations. Every historian that has an interest in or actively uses these investigations as primary source material should read this book.

Several key points emerge from Freeman's study of the methodology of rural investigation. The different agendas that shaped reports on the countryside between 1870 and 1914 produced a wide range of perspectives on rural wages, workers and conditions. 'Roving reporters' of the 1870s used a wide range of informants but most only had fleeting contact with poor rural inhabitants. 'Resident investigators' of the 1880s like Jessopp and Jefferies offered more reflective descriptions of the countryside than the 1890s royal commissions or Rider Haggard's *Rural England* which relied on the evidence of employers and local elites. Poverty surveys of the early twentieth century used the questionnaire method to tabulate the level of rural distress, but they also stressed their intimate knowledge of the local inhabitants under investigation. George Sturt's and Stephen Reynolds' cultural studies went much further in breaking down class barriers and both were informed by a strong belief in investigating the poor 'on their own terms rather than according to an agenda imposed by external authorities' (p. 141). These different methodological approaches meant that all investigations were criticized and contested. So although many of these surveys contributed to a better awareness of rural conditions, few legislative changes were forthcoming. In addition, investigators shared certain characteristics (the majority being male, middle class, urban dwellers), and all studies were infused with moral and cultural assumptions about rural labour and life. Thus the voice of the rural labourer is marginalized in many of these investigations. The reports of Jessopp and Jefferies often resort to the 'Hodge' stereotype and assume rural life was demoralized and decaying. Sturt and Reynolds, on the other hand, elevated the life of rural workers but, as Freeman puts it, 'the lionization of the labourer did not necessarily reflect an achievement of empathy any more than had the reduction to an unflattering stereotype' (p. 152). The 'objectivity' of the scientific poverty surveys can also be questioned because the agenda 'remained determined by elite perceptions of the rural population and its role' (p. 130) and although the Liberal Party's Land Enquiry Committee (whose rural volume was published in 1913) set out to fully incorporate the views of the agricultural labourer, the perspectives of its members remained 'fundamentally external' to the rural poor (p. 181).

The difficulties in investigating rural life were not

overcome in the period 1870–1914. Payments in kind and the wide range of non-wage resources clearly contributed to rural subsistence but translating these into cash estimates was fraught with complications. Regional distinctions in hiring, wages and living conditions persisted, making it hard for any local study to claim to be representative of England as a whole (let alone Britain). Thus there are also difficulties for the author in conveying the diversity of opinion represented by these investigations. Understandably the voluminous royal commissions are glossed over somewhat, whereas the poverty studies of Mann and Davies, for example, are discussed in some detail. But this criticism is perhaps unfair as overall the book is successful in its main aim – to detail the methodological diversity of rural social investigation. It deserves a wide readership.

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DOROTHY CALCUTT, *Born in a stable* (Charlbury: Wychwood Press, 2001). 79 pp. £7.50; GEORGE PICKARD, *87 and what can I remember* (Illustrated by Julia Matcham) (Disley: Millrace Books, 2000). 74 pp. £9.90.

*Born in a stable* by Dorothy Calcutt is a prequel to her 1999 book *The salt of the earth*, which detailed the poverty-stricken life of an Oxfordshire family at the turn of the twentieth century. Here Calcutt looks back at the family's preceding history to tell us the 'true story' of John Ashton, an illegitimate son of a northern landowner and Emma, a teenage barmaid working at the coaching inn at Long Hanborough. This is an enjoyable yarn of disparate lives, involving exploitation, illegitimacy, secrecy, adversity and salvation. Yet the utility of this account, especially for an academic audience, is questionable. John's story is factual and we learn much about the lives of the rural labouring poor: the ravages of poverty and illness, the unremitting work of women, the self-help ethos engendered by involvement in the village chapel. However, this appealing material is juxtaposed against the tale of his father, Leo, which, we are told at the beginning, is 'mostly fiction'. The author paints Leo as a formidable patriarch, disappointed in the succession of daughters produced by his long-suffering wife Mary. The aim of his liaison with the young barmaid was solely to satisfy his desire for a male heir (Leo and Emma also produce a daughter, Georgina, but she is never recognized by her father). Leo is a generous benefactor but John cannot inherit his father's fortune. The success of this mechanism is debatable: whilst it allows the author to avoid exposing potentially sensitive details about a landed family, ultimately it weakens the power of the account.

George Pickard's reminiscences of his Bedfordshire childhood in the 1870s and 1880s offer a more lively and authentic portrayal of rural life in the late nineteenth century. His original idiosyncratic spelling and punctuation have been left untouched but the author comes across as literate, knowledgeable and humorous. This small volume is packed with information on rural customs and beliefs, work patterns, the household economy and survival strategies. Many aspects of his account suggest village life was traditional, unaltered from previous times. Belief in superstition is still prominent and villagers exact their own style of rough music against transgressors ('If there was any undue virtue going and villagers got annoyed about it, they would collect in the street with old buckets or anything to bang and march too and fro', pp. 30–1). Yet the changes taking place in the countryside really come to the fore in Pickard's writing: the impact of Methodism, the influence of Arch's union, the fight to secure the labourers' newly-won vote ('the primrose league dames were busy in the village', p. 27) and the role of transport – bicycles ('What fun we had when wheels came to the poor', p. 60) and railways (which provided work). George himself left farm work 'and went into factory life' (p. 72). This account will appeal to the general reader with an interest in local and rural history, and like all good reminiscences, also includes a good deal of material of use to historians of the late nineteenth-century countryside.

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JOHN VELTOM, *Sindles Farm. A story of a farm and its farmers* (Westbourne Local History Group, 2004). 96 pp. Illus. £5.

Of London origins, John Veltom came into the ownership of the 341-acre Sindles Farm at the foot of the South Downs in Sussex after a lengthy spell as a farm pupil, manager and tenant farmer. This little book records details not only of the farm itself from Domesday times but Veltom's personal experience of agricultural change over the past half century. The text is heavy with enjoyable anecdote in which we learn of the devilish complexities of the reaper-binder, the flair and natural eye required to build a decent stack of sheaves, the (to me at least) horrors of ratting at threshing time, the cold and discomfort of tractor driving in pre-cab days and very much more besides. Like most of us (apart from the loony green primitive tendency) Veltom is glad to see the back of the physically-demanding labour exacted by the land from its servants forty-odd years ago, and he applauds the extraordinary developments in technology and mechanization which have eased the farmers' lot. His story is very much the story of farming; of taking the

main chance, spotting an innovation, raising the necessary capital and putting it into practice. But it is also the story of love of and respect for the land. Again, like the vast majority of farmers in this country, Veltom did not have to be pressurized into environmental awareness by suburban *Guardian* readers; it came naturally to him. Good husbandry and sound rotational practices allied to sensible management of farm waterways and woodlands invariably promote wildlife interests – even to excess in some cases, as witness the pestilential expansion of badger and deer populations in recent years. Again, in common with many farmers, Veltom is apprehensive about the future as the farmer's primary business, that of producing abundant food of decent quality at reasonable prices, slips inexorably down the ladder of official priorities. The possibilities of diversification into bio-fuel production, of effecting environmental initiatives and converting buildings to light industrial use are all very well but where does this leave the 'farmer'? Since it appears that 'farmers' as such are trudging steadily along the path to extinction, a new dictionary definition is now probably needed.

John Veltom's little book, with its unsentimental descriptions of past and present practices and its discussion of the farmers and fields of his own delectable corner of Sussex is a welcome addition to the expanding assemblage of reminiscences and histories compiled by those who both know and feel the land. Here a working farmer has taken the trouble to spell out his own experiences, errors and heartbreaks. All power to Veltom and others who emulate him!

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MICHAEL SHRUBB, *Birds, scythes and combines. A history of birds and agricultural change* (CUP, 2003). xi + 371 pp. 32 tables; 79 figs. £35.

The author of this book is both farmer and ornithologist, who has lived and worked through the modern agricultural revolution, and has first-hand experience of its environmental impacts. He is also an agricultural historian, so is able to set these recent changes into a longer temporal context. In this book, he traces the major agricultural changes that have occurred in Britain over the past 250 years (beginning fairly arbitrarily at 1750), and assesses their impacts on bird populations. Whether you are interested mainly in agriculture or mainly in birds, you are likely to find much of interest in this book.

In Britain, we are fortunate that the recent history of agriculture has been well documented in books and journals, as well as in the 'June Census Statistics' on the extent of crops and numbers of stock, which have been

gathered annually since 1866 by the Agriculture Departments. These publications form the main sources of information on the agricultural aspects, some of which are nicely illustrated by old drawings and photographs belonging to the Museum of English Rural Life at Reading. Likewise, the history of our bird populations has been relatively well documented, but with progressively increasing accuracy and precision into recent decades. During the last forty years, the abundance levels and distributions of most of the species discussed have been monitored by the British Trust for Ornithology, providing good quantitative data, and many species have been individually studied by numerous biologists working in various parts of Britain. So both the agricultural and ornithological aspects of the book are based for the most part on solid information, and the book is well referenced. The author takes a broad view of 'farmland birds', including most of the country's breeding landbird species. This is not unreasonable, considering that almost all the open parts of the British landscape, from sea coast to mountainsides, are used for some type of crop or meat production, and are therefore at the mercy of agricultural policy.

After introductory chapters dealing with the farming background and the birds respectively, subsequent chapters deal with specific aspects of agricultural change, including the development of arable farming systems, enclosure, hedges, drainage, weeds and pesticides, grassland and stock, labour, machines and buildings. From his review of the evidence, the author concludes that, throughout the period considered, continual changes have occurred in the distributions and abundance levels of birds, in association with every major change in farming system. However, it is the revolutionary developments over the past half century, and especially over the past thirty years, that have caused the most widespread and devastating declines in bird populations. (One could of course extend this conclusion to other animals and to native plants.) The impacts of modern farming have created in western Europe what many regard as the major conservation problem of our age. The main drivers of the wildlife impacts are the large-scale use of pesticides and inorganic fertilizers, widespread land drainage and the change to more intensive grassland management, excessive stocking densities and overgrazing of the uplands, the switch in the lowlands from spring to autumn cultivations, and the progressive change over much of the country from mixed farming to arable monocultures. As far as the birds are concerned, these changes mean much less habitat and much less food, and in some species increased vulnerability of eggs and chicks to machinery, trampling by farm stock and perhaps also predators.

No wonder almost all bird species have declined on farmland in the past thirty years, some by more than eighty per cent. Much of this revolution has of course been brought about by state subsidy and intervention. Increasingly, then, the decisions taken by farmers have come to reflect not the most sensible land management options, but whatever will reap the biggest subsidy. In theory, some lessening in the environmental consequences of modern farming could come from widespread adoption of the recently introduced agri-environment schemes, providing that they are sufficiently well financed; but in the view of the author 'past experience suggests that not too much environmental optimism should be placed on that'. Only time will tell.

In conclusion, this book provides the most comprehensive review of the relationship between British farming and birds yet written, with much discussion of the factors that have driven the various changes over the years. I enjoyed the book, partly because of the mass of interesting historical and contemporary detail that it contains, but also because it is eminently readable.

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DAVID W. HOWELL, *Taking stock. The centenary history of the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society* (University of Wales Press, 2003). xiii + 287 pp. 93 illus. £19.99.

Like many small countries, Wales is inordinately proud of its national institutions of which the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society is one of the foremost. Founded in 1904, the Society was to become closely involved with many developments in twentieth-century rural Wales and, by way of its annual shows, the shop-window for Welsh farming. Indeed, a disproportionate amount of David Howell's book comprises rather lengthy accounts of the shows themselves; of attendance figures, exhibitors, financial problems, schemes for raising money and all manner of other matters from the 'growing abuse of alcohol' to the complex logistics of car parking. As we have come to expect from Professor Howell, his reading of the sources appears painstaking and methodical, but since he offers no footnotes and only the briefest of bibliographies the reader is unable further to pursue the unfolding story. Even so, whether writing of the petty feuds and jealousies marking the early doings of the Society, the tardiness of agriculturalists to subscribe to its coffers, or the extraordinary efforts of the organization to acquire and develop a permanent site for the show in the 1960s and 1970s, he seems to have left few reports unstudied and few minute books unread. Merely thinking of Howell's exhaustive labours as I worked my way through the book left me a

little weary! With enthusiasm akin to that of the small band of individuals who ensured the survival of the Society in the difficult inter-war years, he happily engages with details of stock judging, wrestles with the arcane and embarrassing names which people have the habit of giving to perfectly innocent bulls and rams and discusses the numerous 'entertainments' seemingly craved by the non-farming public who flock to today's shows and gaze rapturously at the voluptuous charms of 'Miss Royal Welsh'.

But the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society was much more than the sum of its shows. As Howell points out, the past century has witnessed the involvement of the organization with a whole spectrum of activities aimed at improving the lot of the Welsh farmer and livestock breeder. The establishment of tubercule-free dairy herds, the vital issue of rabbit clearance, sire licensing and breed society registration, the founding of an influential journal; these and other matters, including a variety of educational initiatives, all came under the aegis of the Society. Confronted with the perennial Welsh language lobbyists who argued that the Society's limited local influence reflected insufficient use of Welsh in its dealings, the Society moved increasingly in the direction of a bilingual approach, while concurrently striving to ensure that its shows reflected a balance between technical demonstration/education for farmers and entertainment for the rest. If the Royal Welsh show has developed to become a major event in the social calendar, attracting many thousands of visitors from home and abroad, the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society, for all its involvement in farming affairs, appears to have singularly failed as a lobbying organization. Attempts to promote an animal health research station in Wales, to secure a Welsh substation of the National Institute of Agricultural Engineering, to revive the excellent *Welsh Journal of Agriculture*, all seem to have withered on the vine, along with a recent approach to the Millennium Commission to establish the Llanellwedd show site as a centre of excellence for rural Wales. Even if one sets this litany against the successful promotion of the national Welsh Agricultural College in the 1970s, the track record is less than impressive. Howell points out these bold facts but offers little in the way of explanation. And this is one of the major drawbacks of his book. Lavishly illustrated with photographs of the great and the good (human, bovine, porcine, equine and ovine), it contains little in the way of social and economic context and less in the way of critical analysis. We are told, for example, that there 'is no mistaking' the steady improvement in livestock quality exhibited at the show between 1910 and 1939, but Howell gives no indication of the criteria on which this judgement is based. There are, indeed, many

who would question the whole relevance of agricultural shows in the matter of livestock improvement! Again, a close analysis of why the Society failed to attract membership (e.g. in 1939 there were only 1133 members compared with some 10,000 in the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland) would have provided an important insight into the nature of Welsh rural society in the inter-war period. In the sense that the history of so important an organization could have been used as a vehicle for a critical study of the economic background to rural Wales over the past century, one cannot escape the conclusion that this book represents an opportunity lost.

Readers of this *Review* who know and admire Professor Howell's earlier works, noteworthy as they are for their rigorous and meticulous scholarship, will wonder how far the present contribution was subject to direction from above; I strongly suspect that the form, nature and tone of the book was pre-determined from the start. Knowing Howell, I very much doubt, for example, that given a free hand he would have resorted to the sycophantic hagiography which dominates the latter part of the work. As a narrative history of the Society, the handsomely-produced volume will give much pleasure to the members, most of whom will probably make the index their first port of call. Historians of Welsh agriculture and rural life will quarry the odd nugget from it, but on the whole will find little here to quicken their pulses.

R. J. MOORE-COLYER

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CHRISTOPHER JESSEL, *Law of the manor – the twenty-first century* (Barry Rose Law Publishers, 2003). xviii + 137 pp. £32.

For those who think the manor and its associations are anachronisms that no longer have a function in twenty-first century Britain then this slim book is a reminder that the past not only lingers on in the imaginations of historians, but occasionally it comes alive in everyday living, even if only rarely or marginally.

In 1998 there appeared Jessel's *The law of the manor* (reviewed earlier in the *Review*, 47 (1999), pp. 107–8). The present volume is a sequel and brings the story into the twenty first century by showing how the legislation of the recent past has an impact on land, both on its ownership and public access to it. Not many weeks pass without newspaper reports of trespass, ransom strips, and disputes over access to so-called common places. Even if cases do not all refer to manorial laws, nevertheless we should be aware that the lord of the manor lives on, whether as an individual, corporation or local authority. Even where legislation has diminished their powers, there are still discussions and disputes over the

interpretation of whatever powers still remain. The most wide-ranging law of recent times was the Commons Registration Act of 1965 and this had a direct bearing on manorial custom and ownership. In the present and last parliaments the interpretation of commons and commonality has arisen again through both official and unofficial debates and discussions, not least related to the actions of organisations like the Countryside Alliance and issues over the so-called 'right to roam'. This book contextualizes some of these issues and in particular draws attention to the sequel of commons registration through the Countryside and Right of Way Act of 2000 and its granting of public rights over common land and open country. It also raises the very tricky question of who owns what through the Land Registration Act of 2002. It all adds up to a reminder of the past living on in the present. In particular perhaps it reminds us of the enduring influence of custom and practice. While legislation can abandon the anachronisms of the past by repealing old laws, the framing of new or replacement laws increasingly takes place through carefully considered reminders of the fairness of much of the past. Thus we learn that 'there are now few opportunities for a lord to exclude the public from the right to roam over common land or waste' (p. 44). Perhaps the tricky question is over the definition of what is or is not common land or waste. In short there are many opportunities for lawyers and historians of property to collaborate; the surprising thing is the few occasions where obviously they do. Colleagues in BAHS might usefully consult this book and its predecessor just to see where such opportunities might still exist. The manor lives on; long live the manor.

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## Elsewhere and General

PETER BELLWOOD and COLIN RENFREW (eds), *Examining the farming/language dispersal hypothesis* (Oxbow Books / McDonald Institute Monographs, 2002). xiv + 505 pp. 83 figs. £50.

Prehistory is a profoundly geographical discipline. Prehistoric processes not only occurred over very long spans of time but over large areas. Innovations, such as agriculture, emerged in specific regions at particular times and then spread outward. Language families also spread widely, such that many of the world's languages can be shown to have common roots. The human genetic heritage also has a geographical component, for it is clear that even after the initial dispersal of humans from Africa throughout the Old World, there were additional diasporas to the New World, Oceania,

and Australia, and even afterward there were more movements on a continental and subcontinental scale.

Sometimes the evidence for these movements of crops, languages, genes, and people converges, particularly during the last 10,000 years. In particular, the hypothesis has been advanced that the dispersals of several principal language families are correlated with the expansion of farming, especially when farming has been spread through the movement of people. When people move, they take their genes with them, which is where the genetic evidence comes into play. This volume contains 36 papers that emerged from a conference at the McDonald Institute in Cambridge that explore and assess this convergence of evidence. In addition to methodological and theoretical overviews, the volume has a global scope, including papers on Europe, the near east, south and east Asia, Oceania, and the new world.

The farming/language dispersal hypothesis is summarized by Renfrew as follows: the current distribution of some of the world's largest language families (e.g. Niger-Kordofanian that includes Bantu, Austronesian, Indo-European, and Afro-Asiatic) is due to the demographic and cultural processes that accompanied the dispersal of the practice of food production from the core areas in which animals and plants were first domesticated. Renfrew first floated the idea in 1987 with specific regard to the spread of the Indo-European language family, which he argued occurred from Anatolia with the spread of agriculture into other parts of Eurasia. This flew in the face of conventional philological wisdom, which considered the dispersal to have occurred several millennia later and from a core area on the Eurasian steppes north of the Black and Caspian Seas. Subsequently, the hypothesis has been exported to other areas, with Bellwood being a very strong proponent based on his own research in the south-west Pacific area, and others, many of whom are contributors to this volume, embracing it to various degrees in other areas.

Although the hypothesis leaves open the possibility for language spread through the dispersal of agriculture by cultural diffusion to foragers who adopt domesticated plants, animals, and language, a major part of the discussion hinges on the concept introduced by Ammerman and Cavalli-Sforza of 'demic diffusion', the cumulative effect of long- and short-distance moves by farming peoples resulting in a 'wave of advance' of agricultural dispersal. This is where things get sticky, because archaeologists differ in the degree to which they believe that prehistoric people moved around. As a reaction to the traditional archaeological interpretation that change was the result of population movement, many archaeologists in the 1970s and 1980s embraced the assumption of in situ development until proven

otherwise – except when patently impossible. Other archaeologists reasserted that migrations and colonizations may have played a significant role in prehistoric cultural change. This resulted in a degree of polarization between the ‘indigenists’ and ‘migrationists’.

As with any issue so polarized, the truth has to lie somewhere in the middle, and the growing body of genotype mapping offered hope for a resolution. For the most part, these data consisted of the mapping of genes in modern extant populations that were believed to have been in place for several millennia rather than the recovery of ancient DNA from archaeological skeletons, a technique still in need of methodological refinement. Over the last several decades, molecular biologists have built up an immense corpus of genetic data on ‘native’ populations from all continents. Inevitably, however, the genetic data often provide conflicting evidence for demic diffusion associated with the spread of agriculture.

Europe offers a particularly confounding example of the complexity of integrating archaeological and genetic evidence. In Europe, opposing clinal haplogroups 1 and 9 have been identified, discussed in detail by the biologist Matthew Hurles in his paper. Haplogroup 9 is considered to be the signal of immigrant farmers originating in Anatolia, and its frequency tapers out dramatically along an axis from SE to NW, such that it is very scarce in the British Isles, although it even occurs at a low frequency in the Balkans and central Europe, presumably closer to its point of origin. Haplogroup 1, on the other hand, is believed to reflect the indigenous stock resident in Europe since the Palaeolithic, and it gives a very strong signal all along this axis and is overwhelmingly represented in north-western Europe. These data appear to contradict the notion of much population movement associated with the spread of agriculture, although fact that the ‘Anatolian’ strain is present at all says that some demic diffusion probably occurred.

Renfrew, in his introductory passage, addresses this problem and connects it to the question of language dispersals by presenting the hypothetical case in which farmers move into a geographically contiguous series of cells over a period of several centuries, intermingling to a relatively small degree with the indigenous population. By the end of several iterations of this process, the percentage of genes from the original ‘immigrant’ population that started it all could be vanishingly small, yet the resulting population after a millennium or more would be farmers speaking a tongue descended from that spoken by the original incoming farmers. The genetic signal can become attenuated while the cultural and linguistic signals are amplified.

The European case gives an example of how difficult it is to process these various streams of data. To carry the

metaphor a bit further, certain regions such as island south-east Asia are full of static, whereas in other parts of the world, the data are so sparse that they are open to diametrically different interpretations. The key issue, put so well by Hurles, is ‘whether the archaeological record, which is so successful at allowing the reconstruction of ancient societies, identities and ways of life underrepresents to some degree the “compound interest” of inter-generation admixture that seems to be so critical in understanding the spatial and temporal distribution of genetic diversity’ (p. 307).

As might be expected from this discussion of the complexity of the issues involved, this volume offers no breakthrough consensus. Some authors seek harmony among the competing categories of evidence, while others suggest that the hypothesis works in some places but not in others. Such is the current state of the field. Another stream of data is entering to complicate things still further. The study of isotopes such as barium in prehistoric human bones and teeth, and the comparison to local background isotopic frequencies, is expected to provide evidence on which individuals were born and raised locally and which ones entered the area bearing isotopic signatures from elsewhere. Once the techniques for the extraction and analysis of ancient DNA mature, prehistoric skeletons will be able to speak with several voices about their lineage, which will be very important complements to the evidence from archaeology, linguistics, and population genetics.

In these days when the field known as anthropology is concerned with ‘globalization discourses’, the language/farming dispersal hypothesis really does address a real global anthropological problem. In many respects, the integration of archaeological, cultural, biological, and linguistic evidence is in the grand four-field tradition of true anthropological inquiry. The papers in this volume reflect this spirit of comparative analysis. Whether or not one agrees with their arguments or conclusions, one has to appreciate the scholarship that the papers in this volume demonstrate. None appear to have been dashed off in haste in order to gain a trip to a conference. Such a level of scholarship makes *Examining the farming/language dispersal hypothesis* an important contribution to an ongoing debate.

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PATRICK E. MACGOVERN, *Ancient wine. The search for the origins of viniculture* (Princeton UP, 2003). xix + 365 pp. 16 plates; 42 figs; 7 maps. £19.95.

In 1996, the archaeological scientist Patrick MacGovern published with two other collaborators an edited volume on the *Origins and ancient history of wine* (see AgHR 45

(1997), p. 98 for a review), directed primarily towards specialists. The present book is 'a more popular and updated *précis* of the conference proceedings' (p. xv). The conference and the volume on the *Origins* was prompted by the identification and analysis of organic residues that were attributed to wine in the interior of a pottery vessel found in Godin Tepe, present-day Iran, and dated to 3500–3100 BC. Since then the author's lab has carried out analyses on a range of archaeological samples ranging from the neolithic to Byzantine periods (fourth to sixth centuries BC), from sites in Mesopotamia, the near east, Egypt and Greece. More recently, he has also been involved in an ancient DNA project (that has yet to produce definite results) which aims to find out when and where the wild Eurasian grape was first domesticated. This book popularizes the results of these analyses. It does more than that, however: it attempts to combine a wide range of data beyond biomolecular information – environmental, archaeological, epigraphic and textual, linguistic, iconographic – in order to produce a grand synthesis that solves many of the problems to do with the origins, the spread and early history of viniculture in the eastern Mediterranean and the middle east. Moreover, as we read on the dust jacket of the book, the author believes that 'the history of civilization is in many ways the history of wine'. Wine production and consumption, therefore, becomes here an excuse and opportunity for the author to venture into at times fascinating discussions, and at other times questionable themes, such as 'the search for the pro-Indo-European homeland' (p. 35).

The basic points of the book are that there may have been a single centre for the domestication of grape vine in the eastern Taurus mountains or Transcaucasia (although the author himself admits that this is a projection on the basis of very limited current DNA knowledge); that the deliberate human selection of plants to produce wine might have started in the palaeolithic; that large-scale winemaking began in neolithic times; and that the classical tradition of mixing wine with other plants, herbs and spices has a long history and prehistory, with tree resins being the most common earliest additives. The author attributes the proliferation of wine production and consumption to the development of a 'wine culture'. Once humans discovered the mind-altering properties of the alcoholic drink, it became a desirable 'social lubricant' and a powerful medicinal drug, the consumption of which spread from the temperate upland areas (environmentally more suitable for vine cultivation) to other regions, and 'trickled down' from the upper social strata, which initially controlled its production and consumption, to the wider population.

There is a lot to be commended in this important book, and the general reader will acquire an impressive amount of information on the topic, although some of the descriptions of the analytical techniques will be hard to understand. Yet, the broad-ranging nature of the book is both its strength and its weakness. It succeeds in showing the potential of organic residue analysis for the investigation of wine consumption, and in demonstrating that the study of wine drinking and of viniculture may hold the key to the understanding of a range of social processes in the prehistoric and historic past. At the same time, however, the archaeological assumptions made by the book are often problematic, outdated or plainly unsubstantiated. The author, for example, assumes that bronze age Knossos was governed by 'a line of rulers', when there is no evidence for the existence of a single ruler in Knossos at the time, and the whole issue of its political and social organization is highly disputed. In Byzantine mosaics depicting a woman and a baby, he sees 'a throwback to the neolithic "mother goddess"' (p. 247), a thoroughly discredited patriarchal notion. More importantly, the author assumes a linear, almost evolutionist continuity in wine consumption since early prehistoric times, whereas a more careful analysis would reveal a much more uneven and diverse pattern in terms of scale and level of participation, not to mention social meanings and effects. In this diverse pattern, the trickling down effect may not be the most adequate explanation.

The specialist reader must be even more cautious with the book and its claims. For a start, the author makes the astonishing claim that prior to chemical analyses, the study of ancient food was based on 'ancient recipes and cookbooks, frescoes and drawings' (p. 293), disregarding thus more than a century of careful investigations involving archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological evidence, as well as the even older study of pottery, and food-related installations. Moreover, he assumes and demonstrates an almost absolute certainty with the results of chemical analyses of organic residues, a certainty with which few specialists would concur. Organic residues are the products of biodegradation, and their analysis is subject to serious problems to do with loss and sample contamination, not to mention the difficulty of identifying certain organic signatures (bio-markers) linked to a single plant, since many chemical compounds are widely available in nature. Many specialists also recognize that the chemical detection of ancient wine is more difficult than that of other substances such as lipids and waxes, for which more research has been carried out, although further improvement of the techniques may alter this. Until then, it should be remembered that unambiguous results

should probably be reserved for the rare occasions of finding sealed vessels. Finally, the automatic assumption made by the book that tree resins found in pots indicate the deliberate flavouring of wine (which has given rise to claims such as that the modern Greek *retsina*, dates back to the bronze age) fails to account for the widespread use of such substances as vessel sealants (cf. N. Boulton and C. Heron, 'Chemical detection of ancient wine' in P. Nicholson and I. Shaw (eds), *Ancient Egyptian materials and technologies* (2000), pp. 599–603). The study of ancient wine cannot rely on any single category of evidence, and can be more profitably achieved by the integration of all types of material, from chemistry to epigraphy and pottery analysis, taking into account the limitations and problems of each. More importantly, it cannot be divorced from context-specific historical and anthropological enquiry that relates the sensory and embodied experience of wine drinking with the social contingencies and the power dynamics in each context.

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BRENDA COLLINS and PHILIP OLLERENSHAW (eds),  
*The European linen industry in historical perspective*  
(Pasold Research Fund/OUP, 2003). xxvi + 334 pp.  
20 tables; 16 illus; 10 figs. £55.

This book is the result of a conference, 'Linen in Europe', held at Lisburn in Northern Ireland in 1998. Compared to the woollen cloth industry, linens have been neglected by historians of economic and social history, at least in the United Kingdom, so it is a pleasure to read a volume that provides a useful, northern Europe-wide perspective of the linen industry from the late medieval period to the early twenty-first century. A survey of archaeological finds of linen and the tools used in its making from a wide range of sites from Russia to north-west Europe underlines how widespread was the production of linen.

The study of the technology of producing high quality linen damask explains why some areas were less successful than others in making this material so sought after by the rich. Brian Mackey traces the foundation of the linen industry in Ireland and debunks the myth that Cromwell and the Huguenots introduced linen making there. It was not until the 1690s that Protestants from northern France and Holland were invited to settle in Ireland. Chapters by Robert DuPlessis and Adrienne D. Hood show that there were strong links between the manufacture of linen in Pennsylvania and Ireland between 1700 and 1830, but in the nineteenth century cotton replaced flax in North America. Jane Gray's discussion of the linen industries of Flanders, Ireland and

Scotland during the long eighteenth century points up their differences. By 1815 half of the yarn used in Scotland was produced in spinning mills, while hand spinning was still common in the other two countries. Migration from Ireland, especially Ulster, grew in the first half of the nineteenth century. Men were in a minority in the Irish linen industry and women's wages were low.

In England the period 1660–1800 saw changes in the market for linens. Strikingly large quantities of calico and muslin were imported from India in the later seventeenth century, which led to English manufacturers copying Indian prints. In an attempt to protect the local industry, an Act of 1700 barred imported printed cottons and all cotton imports were banned in 1721. In the 1750s linen still dominated the English market, but twenty years on there was a great increase in cotton textiles at the expense of linen. This was the period when cotton manufacture in Lancashire was growing fast. In a chapter discussing these changes, Beverley Lemire observes that 'offered the choice, consumers turned to cotton wares and in so doing they changed the material culture of their society'.

In other chapters Inger Jonsson contrasts wealthy flax-growing farmers and poor female flax-dressers in early nineteenth-century Sweden, Alistair J. Durie examines the effects of government policy on the Scottish linen industry before 1840, Peter M. Solar charts the birth and death of spinning firms in Ireland and Belgium in the nineteenth century, and Karl Ditt the rise and fall of the German linen industry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A final chapter by Philip Ollerenshaw analyzes the effects of stagnation, war and depression in the UK linen industry between 1900 and 1930. There was a brief revival of the industry during World War I due to the demand for linen for uniforms and tents, and a second short-lived revival occurred in Germany in the 1930s. But these were mere interruptions in a course of long-term decline.

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C. A. SPINAGE, *Cattle plague. A history* (Kluwer Academic, 2003). xx + 765 pp. 41 tables; 90 figs. £156.50.

Cattle plague, or rinderpest, is caused by a virus, one of six related species in the genus morbillivirus, the others being measles in humans, which appeared over 5000 years ago when humans began to associate with cattle, canine distemper, cetacean morbillivirus – a disease of whales, phocine distemper affecting seals, and *peste des petits ruminants* (PPR), a disease of sheep and goats that in the past has been confused with rinderpest. A wide range of cloven-hoofed animals, from bison, yak, antelope, deer

and camels, to sheep, goats and pigs, can act as hosts for the disease. The virus enters the body of an affected animal through the upper respiratory tract and goes on to attack the cells lining the respiratory, alimentary and urogenital tracts, producing fever, gastroenteritis, discharges from the eyes and nose, and, very often, diarrhoea, dehydration and death.

The historical significance of rinderpest derives not only from its immediate effects on cattle populations and, consequently, their human consumers, but also from its impact on the history of veterinary medicine and legislation, and its environmental effects. There are recorded outbreaks of what are variously described as plagues, pests, distempers, diseases, and murrains of cattle from ancient times, and all over Europe. Whether these are all attributable to rinderpest is less certain, because the symptoms described could often equally apply to other fatal conditions such as anthrax. It seems to be generally accepted, however, that rinderpest was probably responsible for the great mortality of cattle in Britain between 1315 and 1317, and further outbreaks later in the century. It was certainly the cause of the better-known eighteenth-century outbreaks that began in 1714 and 1745, and of the epidemic that killed over 278,000 head of cattle between 1865 and 1867 and led to the establishment of a government-run slaughter policy. But these British outbreaks, significant as they were at the time, seem relatively minor in comparison to the prevalence and persistence of the disease in continental Europe and Asia. Spinage's list of animal disease episodes in Europe that could be associated with rinderpest covers more than two pages for the period between 431 BC and 1514 AD, and he then has a further five chapters covering the better-documented outbreaks from the seventeenth century to the twentieth, when the last occurrence (in Greece, in 1926) was known. In Asia, it appears to have been endemic from early times to the later twentieth century.

Given the ease and speed with which it can spread, and the resultant mortality (up to 90 per cent in some cases), it is not difficult to see why rinderpest has had significant economic effects, often accentuated by its association with war. When armies moved slowly enough to drive their food supplies with them on the hoof, they were often the cause of its spread. Ironically, one of the few benefits of mechanized warfare in the twentieth century was a reduction in the spread of rinderpest in Europe, since live cattle could no longer keep up with the troops. Rinderpest has also, and perhaps to a greater extent than any other disease, been the starting point for much progress in veterinary medical knowledge and legislation. One of the first effective campaigns to control it was instigated in the Papal States

in 1713. The Pope, acting on the advice of his surgeon, Lancisi, introduced strict regulations covering the movement of cattle, with stringent punishments for their contravention: laymen could be sentenced to death, although clergymen escaped with banishment to the galleys for life. In mid-eighteenth-century England, in contrast, movement restrictions and slaughter were encouraged by compensation payments. The methods may have been different, but the long term implications were the same: a greater interest in finding explanations and control methods for animal diseases, leading in time to increased veterinary competence and government involvement in public health. Spinage covers the original sources for these and other outbreaks in great detail. In Part One of the book he examines the science of the disease and its origin; in the following two parts he deals with its history in Europe and the attempts to control it there; and in part four he deals with the search for a cure.

Much of the final part of the book is concerned with the history of rinderpest in Africa, where it has also been associated with a controversy in environmental history. It was unknown south of the Sahara, in one view, until it was introduced in 1887 as a by-product of the Italian invasion of Eritrea; within a decade it had reached the far south and west of the continent. Millions of cattle and many of the people who depended upon them died, and bush expanded at the expense of grassland. Populations of the tsetse fly, a carrier of sleeping sickness, could expand more quickly in the lush vegetation of the bush, and so prevented the return of people and their cattle; hence the European view of an unspoilt empty Africa teeming with game, and many subsequent conservation policies. Spinage demonstrates that the story may be more complex than this, for there is some evidence for the existence of rinderpest south of the Sahara before the late nineteenth century. But in this, as in other parts of the book, he does not come down decisively on one side or the other. Indeed, throughout the book, he presents the evidence, usually in great and well-referenced detail, without much discussion of its wider implications or reliability. It seems churlish to complain, for it is difficult to believe that anything of great significance specific to cattle plague has been omitted from this book, but it makes few concessions to the reader without specialist veterinary knowledge, and engages only sporadically with historical debates. It is a wonderfully comprehensive source, but those wishing to work further on the history of the cattle plague need not feel that there is nothing left to say.

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WILLIAM BEINART, *The rise of conservation in South Africa. Settlers, livestock, and the environment, 1770–1950* (OUP, 2003). xx + 425 pp. 17 illus; 3 maps. £65.

A history of conservation by white farmers in selected livestock grazing areas in South Africa might seem a limited topic, but Beinart uses it to study a much larger one, the interactions of science, local knowledge, and the state during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Not content with that he includes a study of ideas about erosion and land failure in Western cultures, a collective biography of South African conservationists, a survey of changes in the South African land and among its peoples, and some observations about the 'rural political economy' of the region (p. xv). To complicate matters further, he speaks not only to academics, South African and abroad, but to South Africans interested in their history. Such a complex narrative demands, and receives, a careful organization. Two introductory chapters, one on the ways travellers, scientists, and Africans understood the Cape in the early years of settlement, the other on science and conservation to the mid-nineteenth century, establish the dimensions of local and Western knowledge and conservation's deep roots in settler society. There follow chapters on the graziers' major problems and the applied sciences that studied them. Among these studies of fire, livestock diseases, erosion, irrigation, predator control, drought, and imported plants are two biographical accounts, one on a major conservationist, the other of a progressive farmer, and the book ends with a chapter on twentieth-century conservation debates among African farmers and a postscript on the persistence of declensionist arguments.

Despite all these topics and approaches, this is not a survey but a carefully organized set of studies on a single issue, conservation in the South Africa, all of it informed by extensive research and animated by Beinart's deep interest in the land and the people. It should be of interest far beyond South Africa and find a place on the shelves of historians of agriculture and agricultural science, the environment, European settler colonies, and European overseas empires, for it places the white South African experience in these contexts, aiding comparative studies and giving perspective to work on other areas. South African farmers faced no new problems, worked in the same world commodity market as stockmen from New South Wales to Manitoba, found their government helping and hindering in ordinary ways, and appealed to the same applied sciences, but they did so under the unique conditions of the South African land, already shaped by earlier inhabitants and being changed by their own actions. Focusing

on the graziers' problems and the applied sciences that addressed them allows Beinart to show the interplay of local and metropolitan knowledge, the ways that scientific understanding clashed or meshed with the stockowners' views, and what science actually did for people on the land. The chapters on the 'progressive' farmer who applied the gospel of conservation on his land and the government agricultural bureaucrat charged with bringing in new knowledge add other perspectives. This last, a study of the Afrikaner drought expert H. S. du Toit, shows unfamiliar aspects of the story of American agricultural expertise abroad, and interested students should read it with J. M. Powell and Ian Tyrrell's accounts of American-Australia connections in mind.

The entire book deals with environmental issues but speaks directly to the field of environmental history in two ways. It offers a narrative that shows nature as an active force in history and includes a meditation on the popularity of declensionist narratives, those tales of ruined lands and failing societies so popular in so many societies over the centuries but with added relevance now that humans shape every ecosystem in the world. Beinart places these arguments in the context of recent South African history, where a minority applied 'progressive' agriculture on individual holdings before coming under siege from a majority with communal traditions and no love of the modern world market. His conclusions are largely cautions: that people must 'disturb' nature to live, that nature is not static, that we cannot go back to some imagined pristine land, and that we have only begun to understand the long-term impact of our life on the land. They are, though, useful warnings and this detailed history an important argument for them. All in all, this is an impressive work that should stimulate and inform scholarship in several fields.

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WILMA A. DUNAWAY, *The African-American family in slavery and emancipation* (CUP, 2003). xi + 368 pp. 32 illus; 7 maps. £55 (hb); £20.95 (pb).

Scholarly fascination with American slavery, particularly slavery in the antebellum South, shows little sign of diminishing. A first response to this new book might well ask what more could possibly be said about the slave family? In the 1970s, revisionist historians such as John Blassingame, Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, Eugene Genovese, and especially Herbert Gutman argued that the slave family survived the brutality and inherent instability of plantation slavery. While disagreeing with one another in many respects, they suggested that most slaves grew up in a family situation

of some kind, if not nuclear then extended in structure. An impressive body of scholarship on slave women that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s highlighted the important role played by females in what some described as the matrifocal slave family, but also stressed the great trauma caused by sexual assault. More recently, Brenda Stevenson, Michael Tadmán, and Walter Johnson have placed far greater emphasis upon planter control and the fragile slave family that was frequently broken up by owners who, despite claims to be paternalists, had no hesitation in selling for profit.

Where does this new book fit in? According to Wilma Dunaway, it has a major contribution to make. She asserts that study of the slave family has been hampered 'by four fundamental weaknesses', a reluctance to accept that owners broke up the family by sale, overemphasis upon large plantations, neglect of slavery in the upper South, and 'exaggeration of slave agency' (p. 2). She sets out to correct the mistakes of 'the Gutman-Fogel paradigm' that reads 'more like a Disney script than scholarly research' (p. 270). Contrary to the wide scope of the book's title, however, the subject is far narrower, concentrating upon the Appalachian South between 1850 and 1870. This is not a general synthesis, nor a decade by decade chronology, but a tightly-focused monograph on a specific time and place. Displaying impressive research, the book utilizes a quantitative study of 216 counties in six upper South states and thirty-eight counties in three lower South states, some manuscript sources, and 600 interviews with ex-slaves from the mountain area. Great stress is placed upon the narratives as presenting the voices of the slaves themselves. *The African-American family in slavery and emancipation* is a welcome and valuable addition to the field. Slavery in Appalachia has not been investigated in the same detail as in other parts of the South and studies of the slave family have indeed based their interpretations upon evidence from large plantations, which were rare in the mountain area.

It is in providing a detailed discussion of slavery and its demise in Appalachia that this book works best. Crisply written chapters mix qualitative and quantitative evidence illuminating numerous topics such as slave sales, health and nutritional intake, disease, living conditions, the surprisingly diverse work experiences of Appalachian slaves, the informal economy, and, of course, family structure and roles. Particularly noteworthy are three chapters on the Civil War and Reconstruction that present a bleak picture of the limited choices available to black Appalachians, who were mistreated by both Confederate and Union forces despite the latter's claim to be liberators. The reader gains a rounded insight into the lifestyles and

struggles of Appalachian African-Americans in the mid-nineteenth century. Less satisfactory is the failure to incorporate the vibrant recent literature on Appalachia in this period, including work by Dwight Billings, Martin Crawford, Durwood Dunn, John Inscoe and Gordon McKinney (although older books by the latter two are mentioned in the bibliography). Undoubtedly, the book would be much stronger if it had engaged with this scholarship.

Most problematic, though, is the application of conclusions about mountain slavery to the South as a whole. There were just 300,000 slaves in Appalachia in 1860 out of a total slave population of approximately 4 million. Dunaway insists that their experiences were 'typical of the circumstances in which a majority of US slaves were held' (p. 5). This is dubious. Not only was more than half the slave population found on plantations of twenty or more in 1850, most slaves were located in close proximity to one another, especially in the Deep South, enabling the formation of cross-community ties. That this did not happen in Appalachia emphasizes the region's atypicality. Moreover, the stress upon refuting Gutman and Fogel is misplaced. Post-revisionist historians have been chipping away at their position for nearly two decades. Very few, if any, academics now accept the notion of slave agency uncritically or minimize the devastating impact of the internal slave trade. It would have been far better to place the Appalachian African-American family within the context of the historiography as it stands in 2004, not 1980. Alongside Tadmán and Stevenson, who are mentioned, important recent studies have been published by Norrece Jones Jr., Ann Patton Malone, and, above all, Walter Johnson. By ignoring these scholars, Dunaway not only diminishes the importance of her own findings but misses the opportunity to build upon work that shares her stress upon the overriding brutality of American slavery.

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HUBERTUS HILLER, *Jäger und Jagd. Zur Entwicklung des Jagdwesens in Deutschland zwischen 1848 und 1914* (Münster: Waxmann Verlag, 2003). 279 pp. €25.50.

From comparable medieval origins in privilege of royalty and aristocracy, the development of hunting in the United Kingdom and Germany experienced quite different paths of development, especially from the mid-nineteenth century. The hunting of foxes never achieved anything like the following in the latter country that it did in the former. Manifestly more edible and prized for trophies, wild boar and deer survived longer in relative abundance for stalking and shooting in a country that remained comparatively heavily forested

and therefore impractical for the chase. In Germany, enclosure, providing clear property rights over consolidated area of land and hedgerows or fences for jumping, was relatively rare and belated. The presence of rabies motivated prohibitions on chasing foxes on horseback, as kills merely increased the fecundity and encouraged the movement of foxes – and the rabies virus – to new areas. From 1934 the Nazis banned all forms of killing fauna involving the use of dogs because ‘cruelty to animals was involved’. This coincided with the elimination of the remaining cavalry regiments in the German army and the creation of Panzer divisions. A few drag hunting clubs still exist in Germany, mainly in the northwest – as do a few wild pigs. Otherwise, apart from decimating declining numbers of hares and grouse, the ‘sport’ essentially embraces the stalking and shooting of deer.

Until the 1970s the German deer-hunting fraternity had successfully convinced the general public that their hobby was environmentally friendly and necessary to maintain the ‘balance of nature’. This changed from 1971, when a programme broadcast on national television pointed to the devastating effect upon forests and wildlife of trophy-driven hunting. The work under review investigates the hunting code of today as derived from legislation dating from the aftermath of the Revolutions of 1848–49 and the extent to which hunting in Germany was consequently ‘bourgeoisified’ by the elimination of aristocratic privilege.

The supposed ‘primitive instinct’ of humanity to hunt was an invention of the post-1850 era, initially to distinguish the activity from its antecedence in privilege based upon noble birth. The ‘instinct’ presumably was not shared by the ‘lower orders’. In response to the 1848 abolition of privilege connected with hunting, and ensuing mass slaughter of wildlife for food and to eliminate agricultural pests, an enactment of the Reaction from 1850 effectively precluded over nine-tenths of landowners from hunting on their own land. Although the author of this work does not mention it, fear of a peasantry armed for the hunt justified the restrictive legislation. Access of the bourgeoisie to hunting was catered for by a provision for hunting leases, with the practice diffusing into ever more remote areas with the spread of railways.

At the same time it became necessary to distinguish the hunter from the poacher and, from 1891, when rabbits were declared ‘free wild’, the rabbit shooter. This was done by creating a hunter-specific concept of prey, encapsulated in the ‘noble stag’. A ‘tradition’ was invented, with its own particular rules and regulations extending *inter alia* to hunting costume. In the process the actual kill came to be represented as but a moment in the ritual of hunting, which resulted in a ‘beautiful death’, a humane killing compared with that resulting

from a Darwinian struggle for survival. But in the author’s view, this was mere flimflam, intended to disguise the urge to festoon walls in homes and public houses with antlered heads. Since 1970 this fetish has come to be increasingly questioned from perspectives ranging from the ecological to the psychological.

Criticisms may be levelled against this monograph. One is that, apart from the secondary literature, the sources are confined to periodicals of the hunting fraternity. Another is that striving for objectivity is eschewed in favour of an anti-hunting polemic. These two facets of the work are related, and justifiable, in that the author is concerned to analyze and criticize hunting on the basis of perspectives presented by hunters. He is probably correct in believing that change in the activity of hunting has only come about through external pressure. And his excellent appraisal of hunting’s own invented traditions will lend weight to the reformist case.

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KIMBERLY D. SCHMIDT, DIANE ZIMMERMAN UMBLE and STEVEN D. RESCHLY (eds), *Strangers at home. Amish and Mennonite women in history* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2002). xii + 398 pp. Illus. £27.50.

*Strangers at home* is a collection of fifteen essays, many of which originated as papers presented at a 1995 conference ‘The quiet in the land? Women of Anabaptist traditions in historical perspective’. As the title of the book intimates, these essays seek to expose the paradoxes and ironies in the lives of women from Anabaptist traditions. (Not only are Amish and Mennonite women treated, but early Anabaptist, Old Order River Brethren and Quaker women are all subsumed under the designation ‘Anabaptist’.) Thematically the editors have chosen to portray the dilemmas of Anabaptist women and of the scholars that research them as one of positioning, ‘insider’ versus ‘outsider’. This is not an innovative approach to Anabaptist studies, as such a boundary is integral to Anabaptist self-definition, yet the editors are successful at defining it with nuance in their introductory essay in a variety of ways: scholars and the closed communities they are researching; Anabaptist women on the periphery of patriarchal communities; gender studies versus mainstream Anabaptist scholarship. However, it is the dialogue engaged in by the essays themselves that illuminate and expand the complexity of boundaries for Anabaptist women.

Methodology is the beginning point in this collection. Hasia R. Diner, in a solicited article, contends that both insider and outsider knowledge contributes to comprehensive scholarship. She draws on her own experience of

researching both Jewish woman (as a Jewish woman herself, she benefited from intuitive knowledge) and Irish women, in which her observer status allowed her to see what the Irish themselves could not. Diane Zimmerman Umble brings this discussion into the specificity of being a Mennonite researching her own people. In a relationship where scholars and subjects share an ethnic identity, the scholar must recognize that as well as the multiple positions she holds – woman, scholar, Mennonite – her subjects also position her, complicating her research. Beth E. Graybill expands on Diner's discussion of intuitive knowledge, and, I suspect, speaks for other scholars in this volume when she acknowledges that sharing an ethnic identity with her subjects demands that she think critically about her own assumptions.

Other essays move the conversation beyond methodology. Katherine Jellison's article about American government New Deal officials studying Amish communities in the mid-twentieth century and Cathy Ann Trotta's article on nineteenth-century Mennonite missionary to the Hopi, Martha Moser Voth, have the potential to explore gendered interaction across boundaries. Unfortunately, both essays too quickly dissolve any tension between Anabaptist women and 'outsiders,' and instead identify commonalities between the two groups discussed. Kimberly D. Schmidt's and Royden K. Loewen's essays examine with more subtlety the assimilation of Mennonite women as they move from communities that maintained ethnic distinctions into more mainstream American society. The Quaker women of Barbara Bolz's essay made use of the Quaker ideal of silence to propel themselves beyond the Quaker community into public ministry. These essays suggest that boundaries for Anabaptist women are porous, even as they are vital to the self-identity of Anabaptist women.

Other essays examine communities whose boundaries are more intractable. Marlene Epp writing about post-World War II Mennonite refugee communities in Paraguay and Margaret C. Reynolds in her essay on an Old Order River Brethren communion breadmaking ritual, demonstrate how important women are in the formation of their communities, calling into question the editors' contention that a peripheral position for women means being 'outside.' According to Epp, great effort was expended by the established Mennonite leadership to ensure that women refugees would conform to mainstream Mennonite values of family and church. Old Order River Brethren women more willingly contributed to the maintenance of traditional gender roles in the communion ritual, as it gave them a position of influence within the community. While less concerned with boundaries, the essays by Jeni Hiatt Umble and

Linda Huebert Hecht on sixteenth-century Anabaptist communities, also demonstrate how integral women were to their communities.

In another solicited essay, Jane Marie Pederson concludes the volume with a look at Anabaptists and antimodernism. This is a disappointing conclusion, for Pederson fails to differentiate between the variety of women examined in this book, whether that be distinct Amish or assimilated contemporary women. Not only is the essay confusing in this regard, it also overlooks the very complexities that the essays have meticulously revealed. Likewise Julia Kasdorf in an otherwise insightful essay about contemporary Mennonite women poets and their conflicted relationship with the Mennonite community prematurely, given the complexities these essays emphasize, asks why 'couldn't all Mennonites be seen as a people who strive to break boundaries and dissolve polarities' (p. 335)? The essays in this book demonstrate that the ability to do so is varied, and the desire is, at best, ambivalent among Anabaptist women.

*Strangers at home* is a most welcome addition to the still limited amount of scholarship on Anabaptist women. However, its appeal and usefulness will not be limited to scholarship of Anabaptism and gender. Methodology, gender and community formation, self-definition of minority groups, assimilation – all are relevant to a larger group of scholars, particularly those engaged in ethnic studies.

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JEAN CHOATE, *Disputed ground. Farm groups that opposed the New Deal agricultural program* (McFarland and Company/Shelwing Ltd, 2002). v + 232 pp. 16 illus. £30.40.

Farm protesters boast a long and honourable tradition in the United States. The federal government has often been subject to agrarian unrest, as it was in the 1930s. Many US farmers disapproved of the New Deal's agricultural policies, and some farm organizations actively opposed the government programs. In *Disputed ground*, Jean Choate presents seven such farm groups, largely from the midwestern states. She seeks to recover the lesser-known organizations and their leaders – an admirable goal. As she says, 'this is a story of people who struggled and lost' (p. 1).

The first three chapters treat significant figures and groups in agricultural history: John Simpson's National Farmers Union, William Hirth's Missouri Farmers Association, and Milo Reno's Farm Holiday Association. These men had been Populists in the 1890s, continued working for the agrarian cause, and supported Franklin D. Roosevelt for president in 1932. However, they

vigorously opposed his major agricultural programme of production control via acreage reductions and payments to farmers, preferring instead government-guaranteed costs of production. Choate adds little to the Simpson and Reno stories, which have been well-told before, as she acknowledges. She offers some insight into editor-organizer Hirth and his Missouri group. Yet, strangely, these chapters devote more space to pre-1933 events than to the New Deal, and none go beyond early 1934. The fascinating figure of Reno reappears two chapters later to spark the National Farmers Process Tax Recovery Association, which played a role in US Representative William Lemke's attempt to secure refund of a questionable 'tax' on hog producers.

Probably the best part of the book is its array of farmers' criticisms of the New Deal. Scattered throughout are plausible claims that Roosevelt's agricultural programme undermined opposition movements by 'buying off' protest, used the ideas of Big Business and/or university intellectuals rather than dirt farmers, favoured larger producers and hurt smaller ones in distress, sliced food production while people went hungry, instigated political and economic over-regulation, and unfairly attacked critics. One Kansas farmer wrote about the New Deal 'tax-eaters ... all the big shots and Cozack pots from the Agricultural College' (p. 177). Some farmers simply resisted 'being organized' by the New Deal (p. 192). Many thousands saw the New Deal as undemocratic, the opposite of its self-image. These criticisms are more or less familiar but it is good to read the farmers' words.

Overall, though, Choate's book has severe problems. One is organizational: there is no introduction or even context-setting. Nothing more than a short paragraph on 'the New Deal agricultural program' (the subtitle) is given until Chapter 7. At least two and a half chapters deal with Choate's best new story – the Tax Recovery Association's fight against the corn-hog program – but her diffuse analysis leads to needless repetition. Another serious problem is stylistic. Choate usually writes in short, choppy paragraphs. Few chapters have any introduction or conclusion. Storylines are left up in the air, unexplained. She strings together too many quotations and presents too many unrelated facts. Frequently, the book reads more like an undigested chronology than a coherent narrative.

Other problems are more substantive. Important agencies such as the Soil Conservation Service and the Farm Security Administration were core aspects of the agrarian New Deal, yet they are unmentioned in the book, which focuses solely on the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. The book's subtitle, then, is misleading. Still, the 'Triple-A' was the first and main New Deal farm agency. Choate says, though, that it

ended in 1936 (p. 134) when in fact it continued into the forties. She does not analyze the Farmers Union's favourable turn toward the New Deal in the later thirties, nor does she acknowledge the American Farm Bureau Federation's concurrent turn against the New Deal; the Farm Bureau is presented throughout as if it were always pro-Roosevelt. Moreover, two extremely minor organizations that get a chapter each – the Farmers Independence Council and the Farmers Guild – seem hardly worth the attention. Only slightly better is the treatment of the Corn Belt Liberty League, which may have convinced some farmers to vote against the Democrats in 1938, thus fuelling an anti-New Deal Congress. A case could probably be made for the significance of all three of these ephemeral farm organizations, but Choate does not make one.

She does provide a decent concluding section, admitting that the 'groups were not successful in either attracting a large membership or in defeating the New Deal agricultural program' (p. 187). Choate tries to explain why, but does not consider the possibility that most farmers actually liked the policies. Although this book is not an accomplished work of history, Choate's substantial research in the relevant primary sources will be useful to scholars studying these seven farm organizations.

JESS GILBERT

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GENE WUNDERLICH, *American Country Life. A legacy* (University Press of America, 2003). xiv + 208 pp. \$36.

The American Country Life Association was one of the organizations that defined rural America for the twentieth century. Born out of Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission, the ACLA was formally established in 1918 by representatives of a range of state institutions and non-state organizations who recognized the need for collective action to address the problems of rural life. In particular, it defined out-migration as the great problem facing rural America and identified the prosperity of farming as the key to retaining population – it elided rural problems with agricultural problems and promoted a vision of country life that was founded on the cornerstone of the family farm. As such, it has been argued that the ACLA, together with the Farm Bureau, framed the political construction of rural America as a policy object, positioning agrarianism at the heart of rural policy and legitimating state intervention to support rural life.

Yet from the beginning, the ACLA recognized that rural life was more than the economics of agriculture. Its second conference in 1919 was largely devoted to rural

health and its membership was wide-ranging. Indeed, from the start the ACLA championed a partnership approach, bringing together farm unions, church groups and organizations involved with education, health, economic development and welfare. The bringing together of these groups was itself an important function of the ACLA which was bolstered by a strong educational agenda. The ACLA's attempts to encourage school curriculums to reflect local communities are regarded as among its greatest successes.

Wunderlich's book hints at the significance of the ACLA in the definition of rural America during the twentieth century, but does not develop this analysis in detail. *American Country Life* is less a critical academic tome and more a biography of the organization – and one that clearly reveals the endearment of the subject to the biographer. It is nonetheless an invaluable resource for anyone searching for detailed information on the ACLA or on rural America during the mid part of the last century. Based on painstaking research in the ACLA archives, the book is saturated with an impressive amount of detail about ACLA activities and leaders. These two dimensions form the structure for the book, first describing the ACLA's organization and profiling some of its key leaders, and then moving on to a chronological account of its activities that is largely framed around discussion of its annual conferences. The importance of individuals in shaping the organization's path stands out from the narrative, as do the recurrent problems of underfunding and understaffing.

Moreover, the book provides an insight into not only the ACLA but also the changing nature of rural America. As Wunderlich observes, 'Rural life in America is projected through the lens of this extraordinary organization. ACLA is a metaphor of country life in much of the twentieth century' (p. xii). The distinction made by Wunderlich between 'generation one' and 'generation two' of the ACLA membership neatly conveys a sense of how much rural America changed during the few decades of the mid-twentieth century and of how such changes threw up new leaders, new challenges and new policy contexts. The ability of the ACLA to evolve with rural America was not wholly successful. As Wunderlich's chronology reaches its conclusion, the distance of the ACLA's rural vision from that of modern corporate agriculture and the marginalization of the ACLA in rural policy debates both become increasingly apparent. The demise of the organization in 1976 is treated with a tinge of sentimentality: 'Its death was a lingering one, unattended' (p. 123).

The subtitle of the book is 'a legacy', and it is the legacy of the ACLA that occupies the final chapter. Wunderlich imagines a third 'ghost' or 'spiritual'

generation of the ACLA that has carried forward the principles of the organization without the organization itself. He cites as evidence for this the continuing concern for issues of community, land and stewardship that were nurtured by the ACLA. Wunderlich also points to some of the broader lessons to be gained from the experience of the ACLA, suggesting in particular that the ACLA taught that not all rural life is farming, that rural life is multidimensional, that community extends beyond place or people and that space matters. Wunderlich may be accused of overstating his case in these ambitious claims, but in other respects the discussion of the legacy is curiously underdeveloped. The inter-organizational approach pioneered by the ACLA is newly fashionable again and there are several rural groups, particularly those with a more 'progressive' agenda, who are seeking to connect the different components of rural society and environment just as the ACLA did. Anyone interested in the future of rural America – and in how rural America got to where it is – could do worse than to look back at the ACLA. This book will not provide all the answers, but its rich mine of information forms a valuable resource.

MICHAEL WOODS

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DAVID J. O'BRIEN and STEPHEN K. WEGREN (eds), *Rural reform in post-Soviet Russia* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2002). xvi + 430 pp. 53 tables; 17 figs; 10 maps. £44.50.

This is an important collection on the rural economy and society in the Russian transition with contributions by leading scholars, including David O'Brien and Stephen Wegren, Grigory Ioffe, Tatyana Nefedova, Maria Amelina, Ethel Dunn, Larry Dershem and Zvi Lerman. Their overall assessment – that agrarian reform has been more successful than is widely reported – is reflected in their empirical research. They show 'incremental institutional change' (p. 408) to quote the editors' summary statement.

Adaptation to markets is the institutional change being studied. Rural adaptive behaviour is identified and described from a diversity of disciplinary perspectives in the three parts of the book. Introductory chapters, including some that draw on articles published elsewhere, discuss the legal framework and provide an overview of Russia's agrarian institutions, such as the commune and the culture of production. A fine chapter on geography by Ioffe and Nefedova underscores the rapid transformation of agricultural space, with much land being removed from production and the more fertile areas experiencing a demographic revival and renewed vertical co-operation. The chapter by Valeri

Patsiorkovski on household strategies covers mostly material published elsewhere, but emphasis on the legacies of the past and institutional organization in rural areas is useful. His update of the 1995–97 panel survey of three villages using 1998 data adds to our understanding of income growth. The importance of household production in the rural economy continues. He also traces the devolution of power to the local level, i.e. from regional to village-level governments, a process only beginning. Zvi Lerman's survey of rural welfare covers general tendencies well known in the literature, including in his own impressive work. With a wide ambit, he shows the importance of weighing opportunities as well as benefits that have been gained and lost in transition. The rural population has lost the certainties and amenities enjoyed under the central planning regime, but it has gained land and property and freedoms of choice (p. 63). Stephen Wegren and Vladimir Belen'kiy's review of land rights has largely been published elsewhere, but it adds a vital contribution to this collection in its emphasis on the security of land rights.

The second part is about opposition to reform as an obstacle to adaptation. The chapter which deals with this topic most effectively is Jessica Allina-Pisano's excellent case study of Voronezh *oblast*, in which the method of farm reorganization is closely tracked. Margaret Paxton's symbolic topography of the village introduces the familiar contours of historical village culture, but too loosely associates that culture with current opposition to change. David Macey provides a close and authoritative analysis of historical continuities.

Two other key chapters in this section are Denis Donahue's on human capital and income inequality based on Rounds V and VI of the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey and Amelina's lucid and powerful, 'What

turns the *kolkhoz* into a firm?' Amelina effectively explains the preservation of Soviet-style distribution at the sub-national level, more characteristic of some *oblasts* than others. By examining two *raiony*, she provides examples of the more and less interventionist sub-national regimes, with the latter imposing a harder budget constraint, resulting in more extensive and more radical restructuring of farms. The last part adds new material in a finely textured work on rural life by Dunn and research results published elsewhere by O'Brien and Dershem.

The conclusion gives a positive evaluation of the state of the sector after the first decade of reform. This conclusion is further supported by trends after the completion of these chapters. However, Zvi Lerman's overall estimate is more cautious:

How has reform affected the economic situation of rural families? It is practically impossible to answer this question with any certainty, as in Russia (and the rest of the former socialist countries) land reform is just one component of a complex process of transition and its effects cannot be isolated from the effects of other components (p. 61).

The strength of the book lies in its almost exclusive focus on rural institutions, but the long-run outcome of reform, presumably the further shrinking of the sector, and the pace of change in rural society will depend upon many factors, including employment opportunities, the diffusion of biotechnological innovation and the impact on productivity of the newest entrants among producers, the vertically integrated large companies, including Gasprom and other energy suppliers.

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# Conference Report: The Society's Spring Conference, Edinburgh, April 2004

by Barbara Linsley

The Society's Spring Conference was held from 5–7 April at the University of Edinburgh's Pollock Halls. Around 50 delegates attended, many of whom were resident. The site was pleasant – especially to one who grew up around the South Downs but has since moved to Norfolk! Salisbury Crag, an extinct volcano in Holyrood Park, could be seen looming behind the buildings to the east. St Leonard's Hall, where the conference itself took place, was built in 1869 for Thomas Nelson. It later became a Red Cross hospital and a school – one wonders what the pupils made of the highly ornate carved and panelled ceiling in the St Trinians room where the nine papers were presented.

The opening paper by Professor Robert Dodgson was entitled 'Beyond the clearances: livestock farming in the Scottish Highlands, 1580–1880'. Using data showing rents in kind due for Highland farms he argued that until 1700 and beyond, the numbers of cattle, sheep and other stock in a township were more closely related to the amount of available arable than the extent of grazing. Farmers kept stock primarily to manure their arable and stock spent most of their time on lower ground and could only be put out on the hills for two or three months in the year. Discussing dairying and the veal trade, as well as sheep and cattle grazing, he reckoned that the proportion of different kinds of animals on the farm before 1700 was not geared to a significant trade in store cattle, and that the big expansion in Highland cattle trading took place in the eighteenth century. Even then, traditional production methods remained little changed. It was not until the clearances and expansion of sheep numbers that stock densities on the hill rose significantly. Sheep grazing initially improved the upland pastures by reducing the amount of heather, but by the end of the nineteenth century changing management systems had resulted in their degradation.

Professor John Beckett then led a lively discussion on 'Research funding opportunities in rural and

agricultural history'. He emphasised that monies available through the RELU (Rural Economy and Land Use) programme and DEFRA would go to projects which were inter-disciplinary, preferably incorporating the natural sciences. Funding bodies were favouring policy-driven research which was relevant to their current themes. Professor Beckett thought that inter-disciplinarity posed a problem for historians as it was difficult to find research partners in other subjects. Unlike the EU, the ESRC does not facilitate this. It was suggested that historians should be tailoring their research projects specifically to the criteria set by the funding bodies. However, several delegates believed this to be costly with no guarantee of success. Others thought the ESRC would continue to fund economic and social history projects through a responsive mode, but Professor Beckett was not sure how long this would continue.

After dinner in the John MacIntyre Centre, where vegetarian haggis was on offer, Dr Susanna Wade Martins gave a presentation on "The most fruitful spot in Britain" (1798): East Lothian and agricultural change' as a precursor to the excursion organised for the following day. Based on work for the Scottish Farms Survey, Dr Wade Martins described the highly successful East Lothian agriculture. Recognised as being excellent in the sixteenth century, by the mid-nineteenth East Lothian farming was a model for the world and continued to be at the forefront of agriculture into the twentieth century. Similarities could be seen between East Lothian farming and that of Norfolk – another highly successful east coast agricultural region. Dr Wade Martins illustrated the prosperity of agriculture in East Lothian in the nineteenth century with a series of slides showing some of the farm buildings dating from the period of high farming. The use of machinery increased, with threshing machines being driven by steam engines. Many of the farms had tall chimneys for this purpose which reinforced the impression of large scale 'food factories'.

Tuesday morning was the New Researchers' session. Catherine Douglas gave the first paper on 'Enclosure in Scotland'. She is looking at the differences between Scottish and English enclosure. An economic historian supervised by Professor Robert Allen, Douglas gave a detailed explanation of her methodology. Breaking down her demand equation to show how she was estimating agricultural output in the long run, she showed an increase in consumption over the nineteenth century. Her lowland rural budget, using a mixed bundle of goods, gave calorific values – a useful guide to whether or not her estimates are plausible. As well as her own data, she is drawing on Sinclair's *Statistical Accounts of Scotland*, and hopes to use the rent differentials between open and closed parishes to obtain output and productivity figures. Reliable total factor productivity is particularly hard to obtain, as several delegates pointed out, especially for Scotland as much of the data is combined with the English.

Mark Rothery was unable to join us but copies of his paper 'The social transformation of a "traditional" elite in modern England; the landed gentry of Devon, Hertfordshire and Lincolnshire, c. 1870–1939' based on his thesis, were available. The paper looked specifically at marriage and the gentry family. He concluded that although gentry families shared an identity of economic and cultural interests with other landowners, they also shared and cultivated socio-cultural links with other 'gentlemen' of the upper middling type. He suggests it was in the balance between these two social identities that the real 'rise and decline' occurred. The landed gentry adapted and adopted the values and attitudes of new elite groups and were thus able to significantly shape modern society.

The final paper in this session was my own, entitled 'Homes for Heroes. Housing legislation and its effect on working class housing in rural Norfolk, 1918–39'. Based on two chapters of my thesis, I aimed to show how Norfolk's rural authorities rose to the challenge set them by a government which set unrealistic housing targets, removed all controls from the building and building materials industries, and finally cut the funding which had only been in place for two years. This was hardly sufficient time for local authorities' plans to get off the drawing boards. Norfolk's RDCs didn't complete anywhere near the number of houses agreed in their schemes under the 1919 Act, but then neither did local authorities – urban as well as rural – nationwide. Norfolk had a high proportion of agricultural workers who were notoriously low paid and found it almost impossible to compete in a rural housing market where better paid workers could take the best of the limited accommodation.

After coffee Professor Jan Bieleman gave a paper on 'Dutch cattle breeding and dairy farming, 1850–2000: an overview.' From 1850, the Netherlands saw an increase in demand from abroad for its farming products. This was facilitated by the standardisation and reorganisation of livestock farming. Herdbook Societies were started in the 1870s and three new types of cattle, the 'national three' were established and maintained until the 1970s. The state had an active agricultural policy providing dairy and cattle breeding consultants and encouraging farming in larger units. Factory scale units using steam power were similar in appearance to those of East Lothian. Artificial insemination was promoted in the 1930s to prevent disease and was most popular among the smaller farmers. Disease was eradicated by 1956 and farmers saw the potential for breeding. The use of sperm and embryos from the US led to the creation of Holstein-Friesian Black Pied cattle which, by the 1990s, formed the majority of Dutch livestock. From the 1950s there was an increase in the use of machinery for milking, grass cutting and silage production. However, the spectacular increases in production led to the EU introducing quotas in the 1980s and Dutch breeding strategies changed to fit this. After the introduction of quotas, the number of cows dropped back to 1960s levels. The Government, pushing intensification in the 1950s, '60s and '70s to keep farmers buoyant and promote a healthy rural society, was forced to backtrack in the 1980s and '90s.

After lunch the delegates embarked on an excursion to explore aspects of high farming in East Lothian organised by Dr Wade Martins. Two farms were visited, West Fenton Farm, North Berwick and Sunnyside Farm, East Linton. West Fenton was in the process of diversifying by converting the old farm buildings for residential use. Mrs Cunningham of Sunnyside and her son provided the delegates with tea and cake which was most generous and welcome. They were running the farm by themselves and demonstrated how the high farming buildings were unsuited to modern farming methods. Most of the buildings were used now for livery, a profitable enterprise as East Lothian has more riding horses than any other part of Scotland.

This was followed by the Society's AGM and annual dinner at which the outgoing President, Prof. David Hey, treated us to a rendition of the infamous monologue 'Albert and the Lion'. Thanks were given to Prof. Hey for his services to the Society and for his past recitations which will be sorely missed.

The first paper on Wednesday morning was Dr Heather Holmes, 'For the encouragement of agricultural improvement in Scotland in the 1780s: ownership of the agricultural books of David Young'. No relation to

Arthur, David Young promoted better farming through a developed system of agriculture based on practice and not just theory. Young undertook farming tours and published two books as a result, along with an agricultural pamphlet and a farmers' account book. These books were published by subscription and Dr Holme's paper analysed the subscription lists for them. Understandably, the agricultural community was by far the largest subscriber. Young had a large base of subscribing landowners most of whom came from eastern Scotland, especially Perthshire. The geographical spread of his other subscribers followed this pattern. Young played an active role in obtaining subscribers for his work and chose his publishers carefully. He had a large network of businesses promoting his books and ideas on improving agriculture.

Professor T. C. Smout then gave a paper on 'Scottish farmers and woods, 1600–1850'. He belied the myth that by the early modern period Scotland had no trees by stating that the most wooded areas, the Highlands, were the least visited. The three main types of woodland were pine, oak and birch. Tenant farmers used the woods primarily as pasture but also for building, tools, basket making and other crafts rather than fuel. Professor Smout argued that domestic stock replaced large native mammals whose grazing meant the woods had never been very dense. Open woods were preferred as this led to unobstructed growth of pasture. If resources were not scarce, the wood could be used for both grazing and timber products. Even where woods were enclosed to protect timber supplies they were still opened for seasonal

grazing. Changes occurred after 1600. Extremes of climate prevented trees from regenerating. The extermination of wolves before 1750, the last large predator, helped increase domestic stock which was furthered by a steady rise in population. By the end of the eighteenth century upland pasture was under pressure and becoming lost to heath. After the clearances sheep replaced cattle and were more destructive. There were also many more of them so long term regeneration of the woods was difficult.

The final paper of the conference was Dr Leigh Shaw-Taylor's account of 'The English peasantry in the eighteenth century: dead or dying?' Funded by the ESRC, Dr Shaw-Taylor is studying male occupational change and economic growth from 1750 to 1850 and attempting to pinpoint the transition from small family farms to large units supplied by waged labour. Prof. Robert Allen believed this to have happened in the eighteenth century but Dr Shaw-Taylor argued that the small peasant farmer declined much earlier and that agrarian capitalism was dominant by the mid-eighteenth century. To support this argument he is generating large occupational data sets for adult males – in reply to a question, no similar data for female workers is available – drawn from parish registers and militia lists. This data could be used to assess, in an approximate manner, the numbers of servants in husbandry employed.

Thanks were given to Dr John Broad and Dr Ewen Cameron for organising the conference, the success of which was apparent by the numbers of delegates who lingered in conversation after lunch, and to Dr Wade Martins for the excursion.

# THE AGRICULTURAL HISTORY REVIEW

*edited by*  
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